



Vol. 3.

Lud. Du Guernier inv. et Sculp.



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THE
LADIES
LIBRARY.

VOL. III.

Written by a Lady.

Published by Mr. STEELE.

LONDON:

Printed for J. T. and Sold by W. Mears
at the Lamb, and J. Brown at the Black
Swan, without Temple-Bar. 1714.

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T O
Mrs. *STEELE*.

MADAM,



F great Obligations receiv'd are just Motives for Addresses of this kind, You have an un-
A 3 que-

Dedication.

questionable Pretension to my Acknowledgments, who have condescended to give me your very self. I can make no Return for so inestimable a Favour, but in acknowledging the Generosity of the Giver. To have either Wealth, Wit or Beauty, is generally a Temptation to a Woman to put an unreasonable Value upon her self; but with all these, in a Degree

Dedication.

gree which drew upon
you the Addresses of
Men of the amplest For-
tunes, you bestowed
your Person where you
could have no Expecta-
tions but from the Gra-
titude of the Receiver,
tho' you knew he could
exert that Gratitude in
no other Returns but E-
steem and Love. For
which must I first thank
you, for what you have
denyed your self, or for

Dedication.

what you have bestowed
on me?

I owe to you, that
for my sake you have o-
verlooked the Prospect
of living in Pomp and
Plenty, and I have not
been circumspect enough
to preserve you from Care
and Sorrow. I will not
dwell upon this Particu-
lar; You are so good a
Wife, that I know you
think I rob you of more
than

Dedication.

than I give, when I say
any thing in your Fa-
vour to my own Disad-
vantage.

Whoever should see or
hear you would think it
were worth leaving all
the World for you, while
I habitually possessed of
that Happiness have been
throwing away impotent
Endeavours for the rest
of Mankind, to the Neg-
lect of Her for whom

A s any

Dedication.

any other Man, in his Senses, would be apt to sacrifice every thing else.

I know not by what unreasonable Prepossession it is, but, methinks, there must be something austere to give Authority to Wisdom, and I cannot account for having only rallied many reasonable Sentiments of yours, but that you are too

Dedication.

too Beautiful to appear Ju-
dicious.

One may grow fond,
but not wise, from what
is said by so lovely a
Counsellor: Hard Fate,
that you have been les-
sened by your Perfecti-
ons, and lost Power by
your Charms!

That ingenuous Spirit
in all your Behaviour,
that familiar Grace in
your

Dedication.

your Words and Actions,
has for this seven Years
only inspired Admirati-
on and Love, but Ex-
perience has taught me,
the best Counsel I ever
have received, has been
pronounced by the fairest
and softest Lips, and con-
vinced me that I am in
you blest with a wise
Friend, as well as a charm-
ing Mistress.

Your Mind shall no
longer

Dedication.

longer suffer by your Person, nor shall your Eyes for the future dazle me into a Blindness towards your Understanding. I rejoyce in this publick Occasion to shew my Esteem for you; and must do you the Justice to say, that there can be no Virtue represented in all this Collection for the Female World, which I have not known you exert, as far as the Opportunities of
your

Dedication.

your Fortune have given
you leave. Forgive me,
that my Heart overflows
with Love and Gratitude
for daily Instances of your
prudent Oeconomy, the
just Disposition you make
of your little Affairs, your
Chearfulness in Dispatch
of them, your prudent
Forbearance of any Re-
flections that they might
have needed less Vigi-
lance had you disposed
of your Fortune suitably;
in

Dedication.

in short, for all the Arguments you every Day give me, of a Generous and Sincere Affection.

It is impossible for me to look back on many Evils and Pains which I have suffered since we came together, without a Pleasure which is not to be expressed, from the Proofs I have had in those Circumstances of your unwearied Goodness.

Dedication.

ness. How often has your
Tenderness removed Pain
from my sick Head? How
often Anguish from my
afflicted Heart? With
how skilful Patience have
I known you comply with
the vain Projects which
Pain has suggested, to
have an aking Limb re-
moved by Journeying
from one side of a Room
to another; how often
the next Instant travel-
led the same Ground a-
gain,

Dedication.

gain, without telling your Patient it was to no Purpose to change his Situation? If there are such Beings as Guardian Angels, thus are they employed; I will no more believe one of them more Good, in its Inclinations, than I can conceive it more charming in its Form than my Wife.

But I offend, and forget
that what I say to you
is

Dedication.

is to appear in Publick :
You are so great a Lover
of Home, that I know it
will be irksome to you to
go into the World even
in an Applause. I will
end this, without so much
as mentioning your Lit-
tle Flock, or your own a-
miable Figure at the Head
of it: That I think them
preferable to all other
Children, I know is the
Effect of Passion and In-
stinct; that I believe You
the

Dedication.

the best of Wives, I know
proceeds from Experience
and Reason.

I am, Madam,

Your most obliged Husband,

and most Obedient

Humble Servant,

RICHARD STEELE.

THE
CONTENTS.

<i>Religion,</i>	Page 1
<i>Prayer,</i>	272
<i>Fasting,</i>	330
<i>Repentance,</i>	343
<i>The Sacrament,</i>	362
<i>Zeal,</i>	402
<i>Perfection,</i>	430
<i>Scruples,</i>	445

THE



THE
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V O L. III.

RELIGION.



RELIGION in the general respects *God*, as the *Object* and *Center* of all its Acts and Offices. For upon supposition, that there is such a Being as *God*, and that there are such Beings as *Reasonable Creatures*, or capable Subjects of *Religion*, it will necessarily follow, that there must be some Religion or other, to tie and oblige these
Crea-

Creatures to that *God*. For by *God*, we mean a Being that has all *possible Perfections* in him, and is the supreme *Cause* and Fountain of all other Beings and Perfections; and such a Being, we must needs acknowledge, does not only deserve the worthiest Acts of Religion that *reasonable Creatures*, who alone are capable of understanding his *Worth*, can render to him, but has also an unalienable Right to exact and require them; and that not only upon account of his own essential *Desert*, for whatever he deserves he has a Right to demand, but also upon account of the Right he has to *reasonable Creatures*, who owe their Beings to him, and all their Capacities of serving him, and so cannot dispose of themselves, without manifest Injury to him, *contrary* to his Will and Orders. By *reasonable Creatures*, we mean Beings that are deriv'd from God, and are *endow'd* by him with a Capacity of understanding *him* and *themselves*; and such Creatures must necessarily stand oblig'd to render him such *Acts* as are suitable to, and due Acknowledgments of the Perfections of his *Nature*, and their own Dependence upon him; and this Obligation is that which we call *Religion*; a Word, which from its Derivation signifies a *binding*, or *obliging* us to God, wherefore *true Religion in the General*, is the *Obligation of reasonable Creatures, to render*
such

such Acts of Worship to God, as are suitable to the Excellency of his Nature, and their Dependence upon him: Which Definition includes both the Doctrines and Duties of Religion. For the Doctrines are the Reasons by which it obliges us to the Duties; and as there is no Duty in Religion but what derives its Tie and Obligation from some Doctrine contain'd in it, so there is no Doctrine in Religion but what ties and obliges us to some Duty that is enjoyn'd by it. When therefore I call Religion an Obligation, I include in that Term, all those Doctrines of it, concerning God, his Nature, and his Transactions with his Creatures, which are the Reasons by which we stand oblig'd to render all Acts of Worship to him. But for the better understanding the Nature of true Religion, it is necessary we shou'd distinguish it into Natural and Reveal'd. By natural Religion, I mean the Obligation which natural Reason lays upon us, to render to God all that Worship and Obedience, which, upon the Consideration of his Nature, and our Dependence upon him, it discovers to be due to him. For God having planted in us a rational Faculty, by the Exercise of which, we are naturally led into the Belief of his Being, the Sense of his Perfections, and the Acknowledgement of his Providence, he expects we shou'd follow it, as the Guide and Director

rector of our Lives and Actions; and whatsoever this Faculty does naturally, and in its due Exercise dictate to us, is as much the *Voice of God* as any *Revelation*. For whatever it naturally dictates, it must dictate by his Direction, who is the Author of its Nature, and who having fram'd it to speak such a Sense, and pronounce such a Judgment of Things, has thereby put his Word into its Mouth, and does himself speak thro' it, as thro' a standing *Oracle*, which he has erected in our *Breasts*, to convey and deliver his own Mind and Will to us.

Whatsoever then *natural Reason*, rightly exercis'd, teaches us concerning God, and our Duty towards him, is true *Religion*, and does as effectually bind and oblige us to him, as if it had been immediately reveal'd by him. It teaches us, that God is infinitely *Wise*, and *Just*, and *Powerful*, and *Good*; that he is the *Fountain* of our *Beings*, the *Disposer* of our Affairs, and the *Arbitrator* of our State both here and hereafter; and by these *Doctrines* it obliges us to *admire* and *adore* him, to *fear* and *love* him, to *trust* and *obey* him. And this is *natural Religion*, which consists of such *Doctrines* as *natural Reason* teaches us, concerning God, and his Nature, and Providence; and of such Duties as it infers from those *Doctrines*, and enforces by them. All the *Doctrines* of this *Religion*,

Religion, upon which it founds its *Duties*, being *eternal Verities*, as they must necessarily be, being all deduc'd from the *immutable* Nature of God and Things, all the Duties of it must be *morally*, that is, *eternally* good and reasonable, because these Doctrines are the eternal Reasons upon which they are founded, and by which they oblige. Whatsoever then is a Duty of *natural* Religion, must oblige for ever, because it obliges by an *eternal* Reason, and so can never be dispenc'd with, or abrogated, 'till the Natures of Things are cancell'd and revers'd, and *eternal Truths* are converted into *Lyes*.

In short therefore, *natural Religion* has only *natural Reason* for its *Rule* and *Measure*, which from the Nature of God and Things deduces all those *eternal Reasons*, by which it distinguishes our Actions into *honest* and *dishonest*, *decorous* and *filthy*, *good* and *evil*, *necessary* and *sinful*. For it does not make them *good* or *evil* by judging them so, but if it judges truly, it judges of them as it finds them; and unless it finds them good and evil in themselves, upon some *eternal Reason* for or against them, its Judgment is false and erroneous. The *objective* Goodness or Evil that is in the Actions themselves, is not the Measure of our *natural Reason*; but our *natural Reason*, judging truly concerning them, is the Measure

sure of our *Choice* or *Refusal* of them; for be our Action never so good or evil in itself, unless we have some *eternal Reason* for or against it, we cannot judge it so, and unless we judge it so, we cannot reasonably chuse or refuse it; but as soon as ever we have judg'd or pronounc'd it *good* or *evil*, upon an *eternal Reason*, we stand oblig'd by that Judgment to do or forbear it. Thus *Right Reason* pronouncing such Actions good, and such evil, is the *Law of Nature*, and those eternal Reasons upon which it so pronounces them, are the *Creed of Nature*; both which together make *natural Religion*. And by this *Religion* was the World govern'd, at least the greatest part of it, for some thousands of Years, 'till by long and sad Experience it was found too weak to correct the Errors of Mens *Minds*, and restrain the wild Extravagancies of their *Wills* and *Affections*; and then God, out of his great Pity to lost and degenerate Mankind, vouchsaf'd to us the glorious Light of *Reveal'd Religion*, which, in the *largest* Acceptation of it, includes all *natural Religion*, as well all that it proposes to be *believ'd*, as what it requires to be *done*, the *Doctrines* as well as the *Duties* of it, both which are contain'd in that *Revelation* of his Will, which God has made to the World, to which it has superadded several

Several *Doctrines* and *Duties* of *super-natural* Religion.

But, strictly speaking, *reveal'd* Religion, as it is distinguish'd from *natural*, consists of such *Doctrines* and *Duties* as are knowable and discoverable only by *Revelation*, as are not to be reduc'd and inferr'd, by Reasoning and Discourse, from any *necessary* or *natural Principles*, but wholly depend upon the *Counsel* and *good Will* of God. And where things depend entirely upon God's Will, and their being or not being lies wholly in his free Disposal, it is impossible that our *natural Reason* should ever arrive at the Knowledge of them, without some *Revelation* of his *Will* concerning them. For in such Matters as these, where the *Will* of God is absolutely free, *Reason* without *Revelation* has neither *necessary* nor *probable* Causes and Principles to argue from, and therefore can make neither certain Conclusions, nor so much as probable Guesses concerning them. Man must necessarily remain entirely in the dark, 'till such time as God has *reveal'd* to him which way his Will is determin'd; and of such Matters as these consists all *reveal'd Religion*, strictly so call'd. For tho' God has made several *Revelations* of his *Will*, yet the Subject Matter of them is for the main always the same, the *Doctrine of the Mediation of Jesus Christ*, and

the Duties that are subsequent to it, which from the Promise that God made to *Adam* upon his Fall, *the Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpent's Head*, to the last *Promulgation* of the Gospel, has been the great Theme of all divine *Revelation*. For what else was that *Revelation* which God made to *Abraham*, *In thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*, but only the dawning of the Gospel? which is nothing but glad Tidings of the Mediator. What was the *Law of Moses*, but only the same Gospel shining thro' a Cloud of *Types* and symbolical Representations? And what are all the succeeding Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, but only the same Gospel still shining clearer and clearer, 'till at last it broke forth in its *Meridian Brightness*? It might be easily demonstrated, that from *Adam* to *Moses*, from *Moses* to the *Prophets*, from the *Prophets* to *Jesus Christ*, the main Scope and Design of all divine *Revelation* has been the gradual *Discovery* of this great Mystery of the *Mediation*. Thus reveal'd Religion was, for the Matter of it, always the same tho' it was not always reveal'd with the same Perspicuity, but clear'd up by Degrees from an obscure *Twilight* to a perfect Day. Wherefore *Christianity*, which in Strictness is nothing but the Doctrine of the *Mediation* together with its appendant Duties, ought

Religion.

not to be lookt upon as a *new Religion* of 1700 Years Date, for in Reality 'tis as ancient as the *Fall*, and was then preach'd to *Adam* in that dark and mysterious Promise. After which it was a little more clearly repeated, tho' very obscurely still, in God's Covenant with *Abraham*; and again, after that, it was much more amply reveal'd in the *Types* and *Figures* of the *Law* of *Moses*; which yet, like painted Glass in a Window, did under their pompous Shew still darken and obscure the holy *Mysteries* within them, which were nothing but the *Doctrines* and *Laws* of the *Christian Religion*. *Judaism* was only *Christianity* veil'd, and *Christianity* is only *Judaism* reveal'd.

Thus, you see, the *Religion* of the *Mediator* was the principal Subject of all *Divine Revelation*; and this, without *Revelation*, *natural Reason* could never have discovered, because the whole of it depended upon the *Free Will* of *God*. For whether he wou'd admit of any *Mediator* or no, whether he wou'd admit his own Son to be our *Mediator* or no, whether he would deposit such inestimable Blessings for us or no in the Hands of our *Mediator*, was entirely left to his free Determination; and there was no necessary Cause, either *within* or *without* him, nor any probable one neither, that *human Reason* cou'd ever have

discover'd, which cou'd incline or determine him one way or t'other. 'Till such time then as he *reveal'd his Will* to us, we were left entirely in the dark as to this Matter, and had no manner of *Principles* to argue from, or so much as to guess by. This therefore is strictly the *reveal'd Religion*, as it is distinguish'd from the *natural*. But since, together with *reveal'd Religion*, God has put forth a *second Edition* of *natural*, which was almost lost and grown out of *Print*, thro' the wretched Negligence and Stupidity of *Mankind*; and since he has not only reveal'd them *together*, but also incorporated them into *one*, *Religion* as it is now fram'd and constituted, by this happy Conjunction of *natural* with *reveal'd*, may be thus defin'd: *It is the Obligation of rational Creatures to render such Acts of Worship to God, thro' Jesus Christ, as he himself has instituted, and are in their own Natures suitable to his Excellencies and their Dependence upon him.* By which *Acts of Worship*, I do not mean such only as are immediately directed to, and terminated upon God, as all those are which are contain'd in the first Table of the *Decalogue*, but all those *Acts* in general which God has commanded, and being perform'd on a religious Account, out of Homage and Obedience to God's Will and Authority, are as truly and properly

Acts

Acts of Worship, to him, as *Prayer, Praise,*
or *Adoration*.

It will be easy from this short Account of the *Nature of Religion*, to collect what Principles are necessary to the founding and securing its Obligations.

God being the great Object of all *Religion*, it must be absolutely necessary, in order to our being truly religious, that we *believe* that *God* is.

Religion being an Obligation of us to God, that this Obligation may take Effect upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he concerns himself about us, and consequently that he governs the World by his *Providence*.

Religion obliging us to render all due *Acts of Worship* to him, to enforce this Obligation upon us, it is necessary we should *believe* that he will certainly *reward* us if we render those Acts to him, and as certainly *punish* us if we do not.

These *Acts of Worship*, which *Religion* obliges us to, being such as are suitable to the Excellency of God's Nature, to enable us to fulfil this Obligation, it is necessary we should have right Apprehensions of the *Nature of God*.

Religion obliging us to render all these *Acts of Worship* to God, in and thro' *Jesus Christ*,

Christ, to our performing this, it is necessary we should believe in his *Mediation*.

These Reflections, as little as they seem to be adapted to the Sex to whom they are address'd, will easily be brought within their reach by Application; and the Satisfaction it may give their *Minds* to see on what Foundation *Religion* in general, and the Christian Religion in particular, is establish'd, will more than recompense the Pains they may at first take in so serious and uncommon a Study. 'Twill require their Attention, but then what Subject can deserve it so much as that which is the surest Guide to *eternal Life*?

If Men were not very ingenious in framing Excuses for their Folly, and in the Contrivance and Pursuit of *Ruin*, it wou'd seem very strange that the *Gospel*, which was design'd to be the great Instrument of our *Happiness*, should be alledg'd to discourage and damp our Endeavours for it: That the *Gospel*, whose great End is to fill our *Minds* with *Joy*, *Peace* and *Hope*, should be traduc'd as an Enemy to our *Pleasure*. But so it is; and therefore, as little Colour or Appearance of Argument as there is in this Objection, we will not pass it by without examining it.

Religion ever had, and always must have, the Character of its Author visibly stamp'd up-

upon it. Nothing that is not infinitely *kind* and infinitely *wise* can be found in any part of *Revelation* truly Divine; from whence we may rationally conclude, that the great Aim of God, in the establishing *Religion*, is to advance the *Happiness* of Man, and to advance it in a Method consonant to those *Principles* he has implanted in him. Nor did any one inspir'd Author ever think otherwise. *He that keepeth the Law*, says *Solomon*, *happy is he: Great Peace have they that love thy Law*, says the *Psalmist*, and *nothing shall offend them*: And again, says *Solomon*, *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding*. That this was to be understood of actual and present *Happiness*, in this Life, is apparent from what follows a little after: *Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour: Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace: She is a Tree of Life to those that lay hold upon her*. And tho' the Gospel, as a higher and more perfect Dispensation, does propose to us, as our great and chief End, *Life* and *Immortality*, yet it does by no means exclude us from *Happiness* here, but rather establishes it upon proper and firm Foundations, and fences it about with impregnable Bulwarks. *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you; not as the World gives, give*

Unto you. Let not your Heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Now the Fruit of the Spirit is Joy, Peace, &c. Again, Now the God of Hope fill you with Joy and Peace in believing, and make you abound in Hope, thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost. Godliness is profitable to all things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. Nor can I indeed conceive how the State of a righteous and holy Soul shou'd be other than a happy and blessed one. The Belief, and confident Expectation of a Heaven, must needs be more transporting and ravishing than the richest Fancy of a Sinner; and that Security, both in respect of this and a future Life, which a good Man enjoys in the Protection of God, and the Assurance of his Favour who is Almighty, Immutable, &c. must infinitely exceed any thing that a Sinner can attain to, and must exclude those uneasy Fears which frequently interrupt the Sinner's Enjoyment, and overcast his Hopes. He who loves God and Virtue, cannot but be happy in the daily Practice and Enjoyment of what he most delights in; and he who has subdu'd his Passions, and overcome the World, cannot chuse but reap the daily Fruits of so glorious a Conquest, and be constantly entertain'd with pleasing Reflections and delightful Prospects. If he should enjoy nothing else, that

Sover.

Sovereignty, Liberty, Magnanimity, and Divine Charity, and Enlargement of Soul which he thereby gains, were an abundant Reward of this Victory. A good Man has the best Title to the *Blessings* of this Life, and the *Glories* of another. He enjoys this World with as great Security as Wisdom and Moderation, and has an assur'd *Hope* of a far better when he quits this: The Anticipations of which, by *Faith, Love, and Hope*, doth at once facilitate and confirm his Conquests over all unworthy Lusts, and entertain him with an unexpressible Satisfaction and Pleasure.

For this Reason I shall discourse a little of *Happiness*, without that immediate Regard to another Life which might be expected; not judging my self oblig'd either to prove the Certainty of it, or to demonstrate the Reasonableness of embracing Misery during the Space of this short Life, in Expectation of that perfect and eternal *Happiness* with is promis'd hereafter; since 'tis plain enough from the ordinary Course of Providence, that the *Happiness* of this Life and the other are not incompatible: But on the contrary, that that wherein the Life and Being of true *Happiness* in this World does consist, is but a necessary Introduction to, or Qualification of us for, the *Happiness* of another.

But

But what becomes then of the Doctrine of the *Cross*? This is a very soft and mild *Commentary* upon that of our Saviour: *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me*: Which is not so formidable an *Objection* as it may at first sight seem. 'Tis true, Suffering through all the Progress and Stages of *Evils*, even to the last, that is, Death itself, was a common, nay almost universal Duty in the Beginning of *Christianity*, being indispensably necessary to the Propagation of the *Gospel*; but blessed be God, the Reason of that Duty has long ago ceased. And all that I can think necessary to be said here, in Pursuance of my Design, to shew that Religion is the true way to Happiness, *temporal* and *eternal*, is, that the *Pleasures* of those *Confessors* and *Martyrs* far outweigh'd their Sufferings while they liv'd; that when they suffer'd Death itself, the time was come when they must exchange *temporal* for *eternal Happiness*. Nor does this at all infringe the Truth of my Proposition, which does not vainly assert an *eternal* Duration of Happiness in this Life, but only teaches the Possibility of attaining it. And I think the Death of *Martyrs* and *Confessors* is rather a *Confirmation* than *Confutation* of this Opinion, teaching us plainly, that in Despight of all Calamities, 'tis not only possible *to live* but to die happily;

happily; which last is no small Accession to *temporal Happiness*. From the little that has been said on this Occasion, 'tis easie to form an Answer to what is objected from *St. Paul*: *If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.* 'Tis confessedly, indisputably true, that had these *Christians* been destitute of that *Hope* which was their Support, they had sunk under the weight of such Sufferings, and so had been the most miserable of all Men. But since their *Hopes* did not only support them under Afflictions, but also render them somewhat more than *Conquerors*; all that can follow hence is, that the Resurrection and eternal Life are unquestionable Truths, and that he who believes them as firmly as the Confessors and Martyrs did, may like them *be happy*, tho' a thousand Seas of Calamities and Troubles shou'd break in upon him.

As to *Mortification*, which is a Duty of perpetual Obligation, for the Purity of *Religion* is still the same, this did at first signify the Renunciation and Extirpation of Jewish Lusts, according to that of *St. Paul*, *Mortifie therefore your Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleannefs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness which is Idolatry*; and it still is the same thing. Whatever Difficulty we
are

are to encounter with, in the Performance of this Duty, it must be vanquish'd, for 'tis impossible to be *Wicked* and *Happy*. A *Wicked* Man is his own *Hell*; every *Passion*, every *Lust* is a *Fiend*, a *Fury* that does lash and torment him. And all this the *Heathens* themselves did not only constantly acknowledge, but also paint out with as lively *Eloquence*, as any *Christians* cou'd ever do their *Experience*, over whom *Sin* had an uncontroll'd *Dominion*, most effectually convincing them of the *Outrages*, *Tyranny* and unspeakable *Mischiefs* of wicked and abominable *Passions*. Nay so manifest is it that the subduing these irregular *Passions* is necessary to our *Happiness*, that even the *Epicureans* themselves, notwithstanding their confining the *Happiness* of Man to this short *Life*, and by a probable *Consequence* resolving it ultimately into the *Enjoyments* of the *Body*, did yet look upon themselves as extreamly injur'd by *Tully* and others, when they represented them as revolted from, and *Enemies* to *Virtue*. 'Tis not my *Business* here to examine what *Foundation* for *Virtue* their *Philosophy* could leave, or what *Rank* and *Place* they could assign it; 'tis enough that they could not but acknowledge it as necessary to *Happiness*.

. 'Tis

'Tis true, *Mortification* in the Gospel Sense requires us not only to restrain these irregular Lusts, but also not to over-rate and over-value this World, and the things of it. Not to look upon this Life as our only and chief Portion, and doat upon it with fondness and passion; and I do not think that this is any thing more than what is imply'd and included in the former Notion of *Mortification*. This Moderation of our Inclinations to the World being a proper and necessary Foundation of the former Abstinence; it being very improbable that he who values and doats upon the World above all things, should refrain from irregular Pursuits and Enjoyments of it. Now even this degree of *Mortification*, and the necessity of it in order to *Happiness*, was taught and recommended by the wise Men among the *Heathens*, as well as by our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*; by those conducted by the *Light of Nature*, as by those conducted by the *Light of Revelation*. Take this, together with the Discipline which promotes it, I mean the observation of great Abstinence from sensual Pleasures, and no *Monk* or *Anchoret* can speak with a more glorious Contempt of the World than a *Stoick*: But their flights, who would allow the Body, the World and the Things of it, no place nor degree in the number of Good Things, are too daring
and

and bold to lay any stress upon. Take then the Opinion of other *Philosophers*, who allow'd these their proper place and value, and you will find that *Mortification* was ever thought by the Light of *Nature* subservient to our true *Happiness*. *Hierocles* in the beginning of his *Divine Comments*, gives us a short but full account of the *Pythagorean*, and I may add *Platonick Philosophy* in this Point. The Substance of which is, *The Business of Philosophy is to purifie the Soul of Man from sensual Lusts and inordinate Passions, and to transform it into the Likeness and Image of God; this is that which it pursues, by discovering to us excellent Truths, and by recommending to us the Practice of excellent Virtues: But this was that Philosophy which the best and ancientest of the Heathens lookt upon as the only way to Happiness; so far were they from judging it inconsistent and incompatible with it. Nay they deem'd this very State of Virtue, a State of more exalted Happiness, and an Image of the Divine Life.*

Hence is that little less than Inspired Heat or Rapture of *Tully*, *When the Soul, having discover'd and entertain'd Virtue, hath extinguish'd its fondness for, and Indulgence of the Body, and stifled Lust as the Reproach and Stain of its Honour and Beauty, and hath put off all dread of Death and Pain, &c.*

What

What can be said, or so much as fancy'd more blessed than the State of such a Man? Nay after all, the greatest *Patrons* and *Abettors* of *Pleasure* did ever acknowledge this *Moderation* in our *Passions* and *Enjoyments* indispensably necessary to our *Happiness*.

'Tis wonderful how much the Followers of *Epicurus* glory'd in his *Abstinence*; that these *Voluptuaries* should prescribe and practice the *Doctrine* of *Mortification*! But this they were compell'd to do by the irresistible force of Reason: for how can he who doats upon the World, and melts in soft and sensual Pleasures, be able to secure the Repose of his *Mind* against those melancholy alterations which may daily, and some time or other will certainly befall himself, and his *Enjoyments*? On what Foundation can the Peace and Liberty of his *Mind* be established? or can he be happy, who is distress'd by every change of Weather, and is divided and distracted between numerous contrary *Passions*, and a *Slave* to each?

To conclude, The *Scripture* is so far from denying, that it affirms the possibility of obtaining present *Happiness*; nor are the Sufferings of *Confessors* and *Martyrs*, or the *Doctrine* of *Mortification* any prejudice to this Assertion; for neither *Affliction* nor *Mortification* are inconsistent with the true *Happiness* of

of *Man*. That *Affliction* is not, the Examples of those very *Martyrs* and *Confessors* triumphing over it, do sufficiently evince. That *Mortification* is not, is unanimously confess'd by the Suffrages of such as were conducted by the Light of Nature; of such too as were entirely devoted to the Pleasures of this *Life*, and that upon undeniable Grounds.

We have seen in the preceding Pages, that *Religion* is not only the way to *Happiness* in the next World, but in this also. The softer *Sex*, who are too apt to center it in things that cannot at all contribute to make them *Happy*, may be at first surpriz'd to find it asserted that *Happiness* does not consist in *Honours*, *Dignities*, *Wealth*, *Shew*, *Dress*, and the like, but is confin'd to *Religion* and *Piety*, and yet to be met with in the *Present* as well as the *Future* Life. But if they will condescend so far as to give Attention to what will be farther said on so important a Subject, I doubt not but their *Reason* will be convinc'd, whether they reduce their *Judgment* to *Practice* or not.

Nothing is so proper and so necessary as *Piety* and *Devotion* to compleat and crown all their other Excellencies. This is the *Salt* which seasons all *Sacrifices*, the *Altar* which Sanctifies the *Gift*: No Good, how Splendid soever in the sight of *Man*, being

acceptable to God 'till it be thus consecrated, and has this *Seal* of the *Sanctuary* upon it. This is a Virtue truly Divine, as well in its *Original* as its *End*; for as it comes from *Heaven*, so it tends thither also, and thither raises its *Votaries*. This is it which sublimates and spiritualizes *Humanity*, refines it from all the *Dregs* of *Mortality*, and so wings our Earthly lumpish Nature, that we can soar aloft to the Region of *Spirits*, and by its Raptures make some Essay of that State of *Separation* even while we are linkt to the *Body*. This is it which combines us so with *God*, that we have the same *Interests*, the same *Choices*; nay it does in a sort communicate and interchange Properties with him. The all-powerful *God* seems impotent, and unable to resist its influence, while it invests us feeble Wretches in a kind of *Omnipotence*, by engaging him for us who can do all things.

Piety may be consider'd in a Larger or more Limited Sense. In the former, 'tis as wide as the whole *Scheme* of *Duty*, not confin'd to any one Act, but extended to all the *Commands* of *God*. For as the Animal Spirit diffuses it self into all the most distant Members of the *Body*; so this more vital Principle has as Universal an Influence on the Mind, stamps that with such an Admiration and Reverence of *God*, such a Love

Love and Complacency in him, that every Act is at least habitually design'd to obey and glorifie him.

Piety in the more limited Sense is taken for our immediate intercourse with God in things purely divine, as *Adorations, Prayers, Ejaculations*, and all *Pantings* and *Breathings* of the Soul after him: In which Notion 'tis more particularly call'd *Devotion*. And this is comprehended in the other, as a *Part* in the *Whole*, nay indeed as an *Effect* in its *Cause*; for where *Piety* has not first form'd and model'd the *Soul*, there can be no true *Devotion*. External Forms of it there may be, but that is but Ceremony and Pageantry, the most submissive *Prostrations* are there but like *Dagon* before the Ark, the fall of a lifeless *Trunk*; the most elevated *Eyes* but a kind of convulsive Motion, and the most rigid *Mortifications* but like the *Launcings* and *Cuttings* of *Baal's* Priests. Of this the very *Heathens* had some notion, and therefore in their *Worships* had many Preparatory Ceremonies of Lustration and Purifying, as being conscious of the incongruity, that *Unholy* Persons should be admitted to *Sacred Things*.

Accordingly *Socrates* has excellently defin'd the best way of worshipping God to be the doing what he commands. Indeed without this our *Devotion* is mere Stratagem
and

and Design: We invoke God as we use to cajole Men, only to serve a present Turn. And of such disingenuous Addresses 'tis easie to read the *Event*, or if we cannot, *Solomon* will instruct us, *The Prayers of the Wicked are an Abomination to the Lord.*

As *Piety* is the *Ladies* greatest Ornament and Advantage, so have they somewhat more of pre-disposition towards it in their native temper. *God's* Laws, which are the *Rule of Piety*, have this common with Men's, that they are inforc'd upon us by the Proposals both of *Punishments* and *Rewards*; by that means engaging two of our most sensible Passions, *Fear*, and *Love*; and the Female Sex being eminent for the pungency of both these, they are consequently the better prepar'd for the Impressions of *Religion*.

This is so much acknowledg'd, that our *Masculine Atheists* make an ill use of it, and are willing to think that *Religion* owes its Force only to the impotence of the Subjects which it works upon, and that 'tis only an Imposition on the easie *Credulity* of *Women*; in which tho' they sufficiently shew their contempt of *Piety*, yet they unawares give greater honour to that *Sex* than they intend, while they confess it more capable of a likeness to the Supreme Goodness, and of the renewal of *God's* Image,
(for

(for to that all *Piety* is design'd,) than their own. Wherefore *Women* have so little Reason to be ashamed, that they ought to glory in the Concession, and gratefully to celebrate the goodness of God to them; who as he brings *Light* out of *Darkness*, so converts their natural Infirmities into a means of Spiritual Strength; makes the Impotencies and Defects of their *Nature* subservient to the operation of *Grace*, and by consecrating their very Passions, makes even those *Gibberites* serviceable to the *Tabernacle*. But then 'tis to be remembred, that the greater is their Obligation to comply with this Design of God's, to let their Passions run in the Channel he has cut for them; so to confine their *Fear* and *Love* to Spiritual Objects, that they make no inordinate *Eruptions* to any thing else, but in all their estimations of things dreadful, or desirable, to give still the just deference to that which is *Eternal*.

And as *Women* in *General* have this Advantage towards *Piety*, and Obligation to it, so particularly those of *Quality*, who we may suppose to have generally a more early *Institution* and *Instruction* in it than those of a meaner Rank. They have besides more Opportunities afterwards of being built up in the Knowledge of their Duty, and by the help of an ingenuous *Education*, clearer
Appre-

Apprehensions to discern it; and when they do so, have greater Obligations to perform it, both in respect of God, of others, and themselves.

In respect of God they have the greatest Tie of *Gratitude*, not only for the common Mercies which they partake with the rest of Womankind, but for these peculiar, by which they are differenced from others; of which, if they want a just value, let them ask themselves how willing they would be to part with them. How she who has fed delicately, would like to be desolate in the Street, or *she that has been brought up in Scarlet, to embrace the Dungeon*. And according to the Aversion they find to such a *Change*, let them estimate their present Enjoyments, and the Thankfulness it exacts.

In regard of others, their *Piety* back'd with their Secular Advantages, may be of a more extensive Benefit; they have many opportunities of doing good by their Influence on others; or if no way else, yet the splendor of their Example, will by the Eminency of their Conditions, shine as a Light on some high Tower, more conspicuously, and guide many into the same Path of Virtue. 'Tis certainly no small Obligation which lyes on them in this respect; for God, who does nothing without an *End* worthy

worthy of his *Wisdom*, can never be thought to have selected some Persons as the Objects of his *Bounty*, merely that they may swill and glut themselves with sensual Pleasures. No, doubtless, he that is the great Master of the Universe, disposes all things for common Benefit; and therefore if he has placed some in a higher Orb than others, it is that they may have an auspicious influence on those below them. And if they fail in this, they are no longer *Stars*, but *Comets*, things of ominous and unlucky abode to all about them.

They have in respect of themselves all Obligations to *Piety*: 'Tis evident they do not more out-number their *Inferiors* in any thing, than in the Opportunities and Sollicitations to Sin. *Wealth* and *Honour* have many Snares, and, which is worse, do often dispose the Mind to such a heedless Security, that it takes no Care to avoid them; and as in the Body, the Diseases of *Repletion* are far more numerous than those of *Emptiness*; so the Mind is oftner viciated by *Affluence* and *Prosperity* than by *Indigence* and *Adversity*. It becomes therefore those who are so surrounded with Enemies, to fortifie themselves, and that they can no way do but by a sincere *Piety*, that whole *Armour of God* which St. Paul describes, by which alone they may repel all the Darts of *Temptations*. They may

may not only ward the Blow, but wrest the Weapon out of Satan's Hands. Here he urges to them the *Opportunities*, the Impunity which their Wealth and Greatness give them to be *bad*: They may retort his Argument, and by a wholsomer Inference collect thence their great Obligation to be good, not only upon the Score of *Gratitude*, tho' that were enough to an ingenuous Soul, but of Interest also, in respect of that Account they must finally give. For tho' God be not an unjust *Exactor*, to reap where he has not *sow'd*, yet he is not so negligently profuse, as to do that which no prudent Man will do, scatter his Goods promiscuously, without taking notice where they fall: But as he dispences all things by a particular *Providence*, so he does it to a particular End, and will exact as particular an Account how that End has been comply'd with.

It is a smart Exprobration of God's to *Israel*, that she had sacrilegiously employ'd his *Silver and Gold, his Flower and Honey, which he had given her, in the Service of her Idols*. By which, as we may see he takes notice how we dispose of our temporal Possessions, so it shews us how the Indictment will proceed against all those who so pervert their Use. With what Confusion must they appear at the great *Audit*, who can

give no other Account of their *Receipts* but that they consumed them upon their *Lusts*, waged *War* against God with his own *Treasure*, and have been as well *Thieves* as *Rebels*? What a *Luciferian* Fall will they have from their *Honours*, who have endeavoured to undermine God's? Who thought themselves too great to pay him *Homage*, and by their prophane and vicious Example induc'd a Contempt of Him? In short, what a Retaliation of Invasions will there then be? Those that have turn'd his *Grace* into *Wantonness*, converted his Bounty into the Fuel of their *Pride* and *Luxury*, shall then have their *Glorry* turn'd into *Shame*, their *Riots* and *Excesses* into the want of a drop of *Water*, and shall retain nothing of their *Greatness* but the *Guilt*, the grating Remembrance of having abus'd those *temporal Blessings*, which if well manag'd might have receiv'd them into everlasting Habitations of Joy. How necessary then is it, for all who have received so much upon Account, to be often reflecting on it, examining what Charges the great Owner has impos'd on so ample an Income? What he requires of them for whom he has done so much? And this is particularly the Business of *Piety*, which in all the beforementioned Respects is, as the usefullest, so the noblest Accomplishment of *Greatness*.

Such

Such has it been accounted, till this prophane Age of ours, which has remov'd all the *Boundaries* of the former, revers'd even the *Instincts* of *Nature*, and will not leave us so much of *Religion* as the very worst of Heathens had. For how erroneous soever they were in the Choice of their *Deities*, they always honour'd and reverenc'd those they chose, committing most of their Enormities in Obedience, not in Affront to them. They did not assign them *Votaries*, as *Jeroboam* did, of the *meanest* of the *People*, but thought themselves dignify'd by their Service, and esteem'd it an Infamy not to be *pious*. But alas! now-a-days we make other *Estimates*. *Religion* is so abject, so contemptible a thing, as is thought fit to influence none that are great either in Parts or Quality. And therefore tho' too many are willing to appropriate it to *Women* upon the first Account, as *the Gospel is the foolishness of Preaching*; yet they make Exceptions upon the latter, and are not willing to afford it any of the nobler *Profelytes* even of that Sex.

I doubt not there are many Lectures read to such, to fortifie them against all Impressions of *Piety*, to raze out the common Notion of a God; and in order to that, depose his *Vicegerent* within them, discard their *Conscience*, that unmannerly Inmate,

which is still speaking what they have no Mind to hear, and will be apt sometimes to question their grand Principle, and tell them they have *Souls*. And truly it is no wonder if the *Abettors* of *Atheism* take this Course; for since they have no solid Foundation of Truth or Reason, 'tis but necessary they support their Party by Authority, the Countenance and Applause of great Persons; and God knows they have too much succeeded in the Design. But in the mean time, what Security do they give for the Truth of their Pretensions? We know 'tis still requir'd of those, that will practise upon other Peoples Concerns, that they put in *Caution* to secure the *Owner* from *Damage*. But alas! what Gage can they give for a *Soul*? Who can contrive a Form of Indemnity, where that is the thing hazarded?

'Tis easy indeed for one of these, the *Devil's* Apostles, to tell a Lady she has nothing to do but to indulge to her Pleasure; that 'tis the extremest Folly to be frighted from a *present Enjoyment* by a Fear of I know not what *future Smart*; that *God*, and *Sin*, and *Hell*, are but Names, certain *Bugbears*, conjur'd up by *Divines*, to work upon her *Fear*, and abuse her *Credulity*.

This, and much more of this kind, may be said, and I doubt not often is; but all this while the Question is begg'd, and a strong

strong *Affirmation* must pass for Proof; for I defie all the *Doctors* of *Atheism* to make any *Demonstration* of their Tenet; and yet, tho' they pretend to no *Demonstration* themselves, *Religion* must be condemn'd meerly for the want of it, that is, for not making spiritual things liable to Sense, for distinguishing between *Belief* and *Science*, which is indeed for doing the most reasonable thing in the World; the remitting every Object to the Trial of its proper Faculty: And they who suspect it upon that Account, may by the same kind of reasoning wrangle us out of all our Senses, may persuade us that we *hear* nothing because the *Eye* discerns not *Sounds*, that we *taste* not because the *Ear* understands not *Gusts* and *Savours*, and so on to the rest.

And yet this is the bottom of those Arguments which the great Pretenders to *Reason* make against *Religion*, and in the mean time have so little Ingenuity as to exclaim on the light Credulity of *Fools* and *Women*, that embrace the Dictates of *Faith*, while at the same instant they exact a more implicit Assent to their negative Articles, than to *Religion*. A strange magisterial Confidence, so to impose on this *Age* what is so universally contradictory to all former, and to the common Verdict of Mankind! For 'tis observable thro' all the Successions of

Men, that there was never any *Society*, any collective Body of *Atheists*. A single one perhaps might here and there be found, as we sometimes see *Monsters* and *unshapen Births*; but for the generality they had always such *Instincts* of a *Deity*, that they never thought they run far enough from *Atheism*, but rather chose to multiply their *Gods*, to have too many than none at all. They were even apt to descend to the *Adoration* of things below themselves, rather than to renounce the Power above them. By which we may see, that the *Notion* of a *God* is the most indelible Character of natural *Reason*; and therefore whatever Pretence our *Atheists* make to *Ratiocination* and deep *Discourse*, it is none of that primitive fundamental Reason, coetaneous with our *Humanity*, but is indeed a Reason fit only for those who own themselves like the *Beasts* that perish.

Admit we cou'd be more bountiful to them, and allow their *Opinion* an equal *Probability* with our *Faith*, yet even this cou'd never justify any *Body* in point of *Prudence* that shou'd adhere to them. Common *Discretion* teaches us, that where two Propositions have an equal Appearance of *Truth*, there is no rational Inducement to prefer one before the other, 'till we have examin'd the Consequences, and find something in the

one

one which may overpoise and outweigh the contrary. Now in all things that concern *Practice*, there are no Motives so considerable either to *invite* or *avert*, as *Advantage* or *Danger*.

Let us apply them to the present Case, and examine the Pretension of the *Atheist* and the *Christian*, in both Respects. But first we are to remember that both Advantage and Danger are to be view'd under a double Notion, either as *present* or as *future*; the former is the *Atheists* most proper Subject, and indeed all he can pertinently speak to, who professes himself a Man of this World. Here he will tell us, that the Disbelief of God and *another Life*, is the great *Enfranchiser* of Mankind, sets us at Liberty from that *Thralldom*, those Bonds with which our superstitious Fears have follow'd us; that it supersedes all those nice and perplexing Enquiries of *lawful* and *unlawful*, and reduces all our Inquisitions only to this one, How we shall most please our selves. The *Glutton* need not put a *Knife* to his *Throat*, but is only to put an *Edge* upon his *Palate*. The *Drunkard* need not refrain his *Cups*, but only take Care that they be fill'd with the most delicious *Liquor*. The *Wanton* need not pull out his *Eye*, but only contrive to possess what that tempts him to desire. And, in a Word, none of our Appetites

need be restrain'd, but satisfy'd. This uncontroul'd Licentiousness, this brutish Liberty, is that *chief Good*, that supreme Happiness which they propose to themselves, and to which they invite others.

On the other side, the *Christian* is not without his Claim to a present Advantage, tho' of a far differing Nature. He is not so preposterous, as to think it a Preferment to sink below his Kind, to aspire to an Assimilation with meer *Animals*, which is the utmost the former amounts to; but he proposes to himself the Satisfaction of a *Man*; those *Delights* which may entertain his *Reason* not his *Sense*, which consists in the *Relititude* of a well inform'd *Mind*. His *Religion* is the perfected Scheme of *Morality*, and makes him a *Philosopher* without the Help of the *Schools*. It teaches him the Art of subduing his *Appetites*, calming his *Passion*, and in a Word, makes him Lord of himself, giving him by that, all the *Pleasures* which result from such a *Sovereignty*. Nor is he totally void even of the Pleasures of *Sense*, which in many Instances are greater to him, than to those who most court them. *Temperance* cooks his coarsest Diet to a greater *Gust* than all their studied Mixtures. *Chastity* makes one lawful Embrace more grateful to him, than all the nauseating Variety of their unbounded *Lusts*: And

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Contentment swells his *Mite* into a *Talent*; makes him richer than the *Indies* wou'd do, if he desired beyond them. Nor is it a contemptible Benefit, that his *Moderation* gives him an Immunity from those sensitive *Pains*, which oft bring up the Rear of inordinate sensual *Pleasures*. Thus his Condition, even set in the worst Light, is not so deplorable as 'tis represented.

But if it were, he has *Pleasures* that wou'd infinitely overwhelm that Smart, and that not only in his *Reason*, but in his more sublime Diviner Part. Such *Irradiations* from above, such *Anticipations* of his future Bliss, such Acquiescence in a calm and serene Conscience, as is very cheaply bought with all he can suffer here. I know the *Prophane* laugh at these things as *Chimeras*, and the Illusions of a prepossess'd *Fancy*; and truly if they were so, they might come in a Balance with many of their *Pleasures*, which are as much owing to *Opinion* and *Imagination*: But if we consider, what Support they have given under the heaviest Pressures; how they enabled the Primitive *Martyrs*, not only to suffer, but even to court all that is formidable to *humane Nature*; we cannot think that a meer fantastick imaginary Joy, cou'd deceive the Sense of such real, such acute *Torments*. And tho' in this great Declination of Zeal, there be perhaps few that

can pretend to those higher Degrees of spiritual *Raptures*, yet certainly were the *Votes* of all devout People collected, they wou'd all concur in this Testimony, that even in the common Offices of *Piety*, the ordinary Discharge of a good Conscience, there is infinitely greater Complacence, a higher Gust and Relish, than in all the *Pleasures of Sense*. But of this, the most irrefragable Witnesses are those, who from great *Voluptuaries* have turn'd *Devotees*; and I dare appeal to their Experience, whether of the two States is the most pleasant. I wish those, who will not believe this on others Words, wou'd themselves make the Trial; and till they do so, they are notoriously unjust to pronounce that a *Fiction*, of whose Reality they refuse to make Proof.

By what has been said, some *Estimate* may be made, which bids fairest, the *Atheist* or *Christian*, as to present *temporal* Felicity: But alas! what an Allay, what a Damp is it to Felicity, to say 'tis *temporal*? yet we may give it a Term below that, and say 'tis *momentary*. For since our *Life* is so, nothing that depends on that can be otherwise, and yet in this shallow Bottom the *Irreligious* embark their *All*. For as to all *future Advantage*, 'tis their Principle to disclaim it; they discern no *Reward for blameless Souls*. In this Particular, the *Christian* does not

compare with, but triumph over them. He knows that if his earthly House of this Tabernacle be dissolved, he hath a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. That when he parts with his Life, he does not resign his Happiness, but shall receive it infinitely improv'd, both in Degree and Duration. And now certainly 'tis visible enough which Opinion proposes the fairer Hopes, and consequently which, supposing but an equal Probability, is the most inviting.

But some Spirits there are so ignoble, that the most glorious Prize cannot animate them; that like a Swine, the Muscles of whose Eyes, they say, permit him not to look upwards, are not concern'd in all the Felicities above, but wou'd, at a venture, resign their Share in those, so they may securely enjoy their Husk and Drass. But yet even those who are incapable of the more generous Sentiments, may be apt enough to the more servile; and Danger may fright, tho' Glory cannot allure them. It concerns such therefore, to compare the Mischiefs which each Opinion threatens to their Opposites, and from thence make an Estimate which is safest to be chosen. And here let the Atheist himself cast up the Account, of the Dangers consequent to Christianity, and it can all amount but to this, the Deprivati-

on, or rather *Moderation*, of some present *Sensual* Pleasures, or the incurring of some present *sensitive* Pains; the former in the daily Exercise of *Temperance* and *Mortification*; the latter more rarely, and oftner in Purpose than Act, the suffering for *Righteousness* sake. And both these the *Christian* balances, nay outweighs, by two more important present *Hazards* on the other side. To the former, he opposes the *Danger* of being enslav'd to the brutish Part of a Man's self; a thing so deplorable in the Judgment of *Humanity*, that all Writers of *Ethicks* have unanimonously declar'd, no *Servility* to be so sordid and intolerable, as that of the vicious Man to his *Passions* and *Lusts*. To the latter, he confronts the Mischief of being a Slave to every Man else; for such he certainly is, whom the Fear of suffering, can baffle out of any thing he thinks Just and Honest. For if all the Men in the World cou'd successively have the Power to afflict him, they wou'd have also to command and rule him: And what can be more abject, more below the Dignity of *human Nature*, than to have a Spirit always prepar'd for such a *Servitude*? Besides, even the utmost Suffering which *Christianity* can at any time require, is out-vy'd daily by the Effects of *Luxury* and *Rage*; and for one that has

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Opportunity to be a *Martyr* for his God, *thousands* become so to their Vices.

If from the *present* we look forward to *future* Dangers, the *Atheist* must here be perfectly silent. He cannot say, that the *Christian*, after this Life, shall be in any worse *Estate* than himself, since he concludes they shall both be the same *Nothing*; but the *Christian* threatens him with a more dismal State; he allows him indeed a *Being*, and an *Eternal* one, but it is only such, as qualifies him for a Misery as *Eternal*. The Worm that never dies, the Fire unquenchable, where all the Excesses of his short Pleasures shall be reveng'd with more excessive endless Torments. His *Senses*, which were here the only Organs of his *Felicity*, shall then be, tho' not the only, the very sensible *Mediums* of his Wretchedness; and that *Conscience*, which he here suspended from its Office, shall then take out its Arrears, and return all its stifled Admonitions, in perpetual Horrors and desperate *Upbraidings*.

To conclude, The Result of all is, that the transitory *Pleasures* of the *Atheist* are over-pois'd, even by the present *Satisfactions* of the Pious. And the *Eternity* of unbounded, unconceivable *Joys* he expects hereafter, comes in over and above, having nothing on the other side that offers at a Competition.

petition with it. And at the very same rate of Proportion, we have seen the Dangers also are; so that we can easily compute the utmost Mischief our *Christianity* can do to us if it shou'd be false; but the Damage of the other is inestimable, both for the Penalty of *Loss* and *Sense*. I may now appeal to *common Prudence*, to judge of the vast Inequality, and to pronounce, that sure there had need be some great Evidence of *Truth* on the *Atheist's* side, to preponderate all these Disadvantages. Indeed nothing much below a *Demonstration* can justify the Choice of so dangerous *Principles*: I am sure an equal Probability can never do it, where the Danger is so unequal; and were the veriest *Atheist* consulted in a secular Case of the like Circumstances, wou'd certainly pronounce him a *Mad-man* that shou'd make such an *Election*. How desperate a Frenzy then is it, to do it without so much as that equal Probability, or indeed any Probability at all? And yet this *Madness* sets up for the Monopoly, not of *Wit* only, but Reason too, and by Confidence and Clamour seeks to run down those Arguments it can never confute.

My present Business being to recommend *Piety*, I can no way do that so effectually, as by shewing its consonancy to right *Reason*, especially considering the busie Industry

stry now us'd to represent it under another form; and to alienate from it those very Persons whose *Greatness* may give it any *Lustre* or *Repute* in the World. Of which sort I suppose there are few more frequently attack'd than *Women* of *Quality*, who converse among those that call themselves the *Wits* of the *Age*.

'Tis to no purpose to enquire at what time, and by what Examples this Flood of *Impiety* broke in upon us, unless we did more our selves to get clear of it, and ceased at least to refine on the Vices which are complain'd of. The Air is still as infectious, and we still want *Antidotes* to defend our selves from the Infection.

One cannot help advising the Great, especially of the Sex we more particularly Address to, to have a care how they combine with *Seducers* against themselves; but if they have been so unhappy as to lend one Ear to *Infidelity*, yet at least not to give up both to be forc'd into a Slavish Submission to its *Dictates*, but hear what may be offer'd on the side of *Faith*. Sure 'tis but a low Composition for *God* thus to divide with *Satan*; yet it is that of which his *Emissaries* are so jealous, that 'tis one of their Grand *Maxims*, that none who professes Divinity, is to be advis'd with; and therefore by all Arts they are to be render'd either

ther *Ridiculous*, or *Suspected*. To which methinks may be apply'd the Fable, which *Demosthenes* once recited to the *Athenians*, when *Alexander* demanded of them to deliver up their *Orator*; of the *Wolves* and the *Sheep*, their coming to a Treaty. The first Article of the *Wolves* was, That the *Sheep* should give up their *Mastiffs* which guarded them. The Resemblance is too obvious to need a minute Application.

But this is manifestly to reverse all former *Rules*, and to trust a Man rather in any *Faculty* than in his *own*, and wou'd never have prevail'd in any thing, but where the Soul is concern'd; that poor despicable thing, whereon alone we think fit to make Experiments. 'Tis sure that if any should dispute their Title to an Earthly Possession, they would not so tamely resign it, nor would trust their own selves in its *Defence*, but would consult their ablest *Lawyers*, and by them sift out every Circumstance that might establish their Claim. Why should they then suffer themselves to be talk'd out of an *Heavenly* Inheritance, without so much as once proposing their Doubts to those whose Study and Profession it is to resolve them? But as in all other *Ills*, so in this, Prevention is better than *Cure*; and therefore to those that are yet untainted, the securest course will be
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to stop both Ears against all profane Insinuations, and to use those who tempt them to be *disloyal* to their *God*, that *spiritual* Adultery, as they shou'd do those that sollicit them to the *carnal*, not so much as to enter *parley*, but with the greatest Indignation detest and reject them. 'Tis the Saying of the Wise Man, that *an angry Countenance driveth away a backbiting Tongue*: And certainly, wou'd great Persons look severely on such Defamers of Religion, they wou'd give some Check to that *Impudence* of Profaneness, which has given it such a Vogue in the World.

And thus much it is sure their Duty to do, if they own any Relation to that *God* who is so dishonour'd. They wou'd think it a very disingenuous thing to sit by, and hear a *Friend* or *Benefactor* revil'd, and express no Displeasure. Is *God* then so friendless among them, that only his *Traducers* and *Blasphemers* can be patiently heard? Among the *Jews*, at the hearing of any *Blasphemy*, they rent their Cloaths, as we have elsewhere observ'd; but I fear we have some of our nice *Dames* that wou'd be much more concern'd at a *rip* in their Garment, than at the rending and violating *God's* sacred Name; that could more patiently behold the total Subversion of *Religion*, than the Disorder or misplacing of a Lock or a Ribband. But

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'tis to be hop'd there are not many so impious, and those that are not, will surely think themselves oblig'd with all their Power to discountenance all the *Factors* of *Irreligion*; whether they be the solemn *sedater* sort that would argue, or the *jollyer* that would rally them out of their *Faith*.

But when they have thus provided against the *Assaults* of others, and secur'd the *speculative* part of *Religion*; they have only establish'd a *Judicatory* against themselves, stor'd up Matter of Conviction and Accusation, if they answer it not in the practick. It behoves them therefore seriously to weigh the Obligations they have to *Piety* in the general Notion of it, as it comprehends all the *Duties of a Christian Life*; of which I know not where to find a better *Summary* than St. *James* has drawn up, *Pure Religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World.*

Besides this *general*, there is, as I said already, another more restrain'd Notion of *Piety*, as it relates to our more immediate Intercourse with God in divine *Ordinances*, and *Worship*. In which respect it commonly passes under the Name of *Devotion*; and, thus consider'd, it has a great Propriety to the *Female Sex*. For *Devotion* is a tender Plant,

Plant, that will scarce root in stiff or rocky Ground, but requires a supple gentle Soil, and therefore the feminine Softness and Pliability are very apt and proper for it; and accordingly there have been very eminent Growths of it in that *Sex*. I need not heap up Examples of former Ages, but rather persuade this to leave some at least to the following; and the more considerable the Persons are, the more conspicuous will be the Example, which seems the more to adapt it to those I now speak to. *Devotion* in a *Cloister* is as *recluse* as the *Votary*: A *Light* rather under a *Bushel* than on a *Candlestick*; and, in an obscure *Cottage*, 'tis either not observ'd, or else thought to be but the Effect of Destitution and secular Wants, a *Reserve* rather than a *Choice*; but when those who are in the Eye of the World, the most eminent *Actors* on the *Theatre* of human Life, shall chuse the part of a *Saint*, when those who want none of the Diversifements or Blandishments of *Earth*, shall have their Conversation in *Heaven*; this recommends it to the *Spectators* as the true and greatest Object of human *Choice*, since 'tis chosen by those who know the utmost Pretence of all its *Competitors*.

Nor is *Devotion* only more excellent in them, in regard of its Effects, but 'tis also more necessary in respect of their Obligation.

on. *Devotion* is an *Abstraction* from the World, and therefore cannot, in any eminent Degrees, be practised by those whose Necessities or Business do much entangle them in it. From such, a far less Proportion will be accepted, than from those whose *Plenty* and *Ease* give them no other want but that of *Employment*. And certainly, if there be any of whom that can be truly said, *Women* of *Quality* are the *Persons*; for they, in this respect, exceed even *Men* of the like Rank. *Men* are often engag'd in publick *Employments*, and must lend most of their Time to the Use of others; or however all have the Care of their own private Affairs, the Managery of their Fortunes to employ them. But of *Women*, the utmost that is ordinarily required, is but a little easie *Inspection* within their own *Walls*, the Oversight of a few *Children* and *Servants*. And even from this, how many are by their Condition of Life exempted, and how many more do by their Niceness and Delicacy exempt themselves? And surely so perfect a Vacancy is neither *happy* nor *safe*; wherefore God, who projects we shou'd be both, never design'd it for any of Mankind; but where he gives so much Liberty from *secular*, he expects a greater Diligence in *spiritual* *Employments*.

And

And indeed 'tis an amazing thing to see, that any, into whom he has breath'd the *Breath of Life*, on whom he has stamp'd the Image of his own *Eternity*, can think those immortal *Souls* were given them, only to serve the mean and abject Uses of their corruptible *Bodies*, for which the *Soul* of the dullest *Animal* wou'd have done as well: That Eating and Drinking, Sleep and Recreations, which are only useful to the supporting us in this World, are the only things for which we were sent hither. And yet if we may measure their *Opinions* by their *Practice*, this seems to be the Persuasion of many of our Female *Gentry*, who look upon it as a degrading, a kind of Attainder of their Blood, to do any thing but please their Senses: An Error sure of the most pernicious Consequence imaginable. We know a *Lady of Pleasure* is, in one Sense, a very scandalous Epithet, and truly 'tis no very laudable one in the other. She whose sole universal Aim is *Pleasure*, will not think her self much out of her Road in the Pursuit of any Particular; and she that thinks she lives for no other Purpose, will so often be at a Loss for *innocent Pleasure*, that she is almost under a Necessity to call in the *No-cent*, to serve the very End as she supposes of her *Being*. But indeed, were they sure to confine themselves to such as are harmless in
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their kind, yet the Excess of them renders them sinful, and the doating Pursuit denominates them *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*; a Character so black, that the Apostle compleats his *Catalogue* of the worst *Vices* of the worst *Times* with it. And consequently it agrees so exactly with the loose degenerate Age into which we are fallen, that we ought to look upon it as a Matter of the highest Concern, to endeavour after a Reformation, and thereby prevent the falling down of the heaviest Judgments on our Heads. The *Contempt of Religion* is grown to such a heighth, that hardly the Appearance of Morality and Decency remains: *Ladies of Quality* looking upon it as a part of their very liberal Breeding, to shew that their Behaviour in all things depends entirely on their *Humour*, and that they are incapable of all Restraint. Do such as these consider, that 'tis the Goodness of God which has design'd a Rescue for those whose Condition exposes them to such Dangers, by exacting a liberal Expence of Time in their *Devotion*, to divert them from lavishing both it and their Souls together? Neither does he by this defeat their Aim of a pleasant Life, but rather assist it: For whereas sensual Delights are vagrant, and must be chas'd thro' a hundred Turnings and wild *Mazes*, the spiritual are fixt, and

one may always know where to find them. How often are the voluptuous in Pain to know which Pleasure to chuse? Like a surfeited Stomach, the greater Variety is set before it, the more it nauseates all. What Difficulties has a Lady many times to resolve, whether an Afternoon shall be spent at the *Court* or the *Theatre*? Whether in *Dancing* or at *Cards*? In giving or receiving *Visits*? as not knowing which will best please her. But she that knows the *Delights* of *Devotion*, knows withal that there is no other fit to come into Competition with it, and so is not distracted in her *Choice*, nor need go farther than her *Closet* for the most agreeable Entertainment. This, I know, will sound a little incredible, to those that take a *Closet* to have no other use than to be a Conservatory of Toys and Trifles, that aspire to no Pleasure there above that of *Children*, the playing with the Pictures and Puppets that adorn it. Nor indeed do I pretend that such shall find those *Satisfactions* I speak of. Those whose Errand is to *Beelzebub*, the God of *Flies*, must not expect to be treated by the God of *Israel*. An ingenuous Man will scorn to obtrude himself on those who desire not his Company, and God certainly will not make himself more cheap. Those that will meet him in their *Closets*, must come with that Design,

sign, resort thither as to an *Oratory*, and must also come frequently too. Spiritual *Joys* know not the way to a Place where they are not often invited; and as *Men* seek for each other, not in Places where they seldom or never come, but where they daily frequent, so God contrives not to meet us in that Place, where we appear rarely and accidentally, but where we usually resort.

There are so many printed *Directories*, for publick and private Worship, that I need only observe here the Order and Connexion of these two, that they are neither to be sever'd, nor yet to be rang'd preposterously. The *private* must not juggle out the *publick*, for God expects his solemn Homage; and their huddling it up in *private*, as it may give *Men* ground to suspect they pay none at all, so neither God nor Man can collect any thing better from it, than that they are ashamed of the *Deity* they pretend to serve. On the other side, the *publick* must as little swallow up the *private*, and where it does, there may be just doubt of its Sincerity. Many *Attractives* there may be to *Church*, besides that of *Piety*, and indeed, where that is really the Motive, it teaches so much *Reverence* to that awful *Presence* they are to approach, as not to come without some *Preparation*. What Solicitude, what critical Niceness, will a *Lady* have for her *Dress*, when

when she is to appear at a solemn Meeting at Court? And shall she take no Care, how sordidly, how undecently she appears, when the *King of Kings* gives Audience? Shall many Hours, Days, nay perhaps Weeks, be taken up in contriving for the one, and shall there never be a Minute allotted for the other? This were sure very unequal, and yet this is the Case, where the *Devotion* of the *Closet* does not prepare for that of the *Church*. If the Mind be not first tun'd there, it will be very ill qualify'd for that *Harmony* of *Souls*, which is the only thing God regards in our publick Offices. But indeed, *private Devotion* is not only a needful *Preparative* to that *sacred Commerce*, but to our *Cure*. The World is only a larger sort of a *Pesthouse*: In every Corner of it we meet with infectious Airs, and those that converse in it had need of this *Antidote*. How many *Temptations* does every Place, every Hour, every Interview, present to the shocking even of that moral Integrity, which a sober *Heathen* would judge fit to preserve, much more of that strict Piety our *Christianity* exacts?

There is another Motive to this private and constant Exercise of Devotion, which should weigh more than all others, tho' every Motive has of itself weight sufficient to incline a just Mind to the Performance of

it, and that is the Consideration that God is present in all Places, that he sees every Action, hears all Discourses, and understands every Thought: He is wholly in every Place, but included in none; not bound with Cords, except those of Love; not divided into Parts, not changeable into several Shapes, filling Heaven and Earth with his present Power, and never-absent Nature. This is enough to excite us to be frequent and fervent in our private Devotions, that our whole Lives may be sanctify'd, and made acceptable to that most awful Presence in which we always stand. We may imagine God to be as the *Air* and the *Sea*, and we all inclos'd in his *Circle*, wrapt up in the Lap of his infinite *Nature*; or as *Infants* in the *Wombs* of their pregnant *Mothers*: And we can no more be remov'd from the Presence of God than from our *Being*.

The Presence of God is understood by us in several Manners, and to several Purposes.

God is present by his *Essence*, which, because it is infinite, cannot be contain'd within the Limits of any Place; and because he is of an essential Purity, and spiritual Nature, he cannot be undervalu'd by being suppos'd present in the Places of unnatural Uncleaness. As the Sun reflecting upon the Mud of Strands and Shoars, is unpol-
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luted in his Beams, so is God not dishonoured when we suppose him in every one of his Creatures, and in every part of every one of them; being still as unmixt with any unhandsome Adherence, as the Soul is in the Bowels of the Body.

God is every where present by his *Power*; he rolls the *Orbs* of Heaven with his *Hand*; he fixes the Earth with his *Foot*; he guides all the Creatures with his *Eye*, and refreshes them with his Influence; he makes the Powers of Hell to shake with his *Terrors*, binds the Devils with his *Word*, throws them out with his *Command*, and sends the Angels on Embassies with his *Decrees*. He hardens the Joints of Infants, and confirms the Bones, when they are *fashioned beneath secretly in the Earth*. He it is that assists at the numerous Productions of Fishes, and there is not one Hollownes in the bottom of the *Sea*, but he shews himself to be Lord of it, by sustaining the Creatures that come to dwell in it. In the Wilderness, the *Bittern* and the *Stork*, the *Elk* and the *Bear*, live upon his Provisions, revere his Power, and feel the Force of his *Almightiness*.

God is more specially present in some Places, by the several and more special Manifestations of himself, to extraordinary Purposes. Thus his Seat is in Heaven: He sits there encircled with all the outward

Demonstrations of his Glory, which he is pleas'd to shew to all the Inhabitants of those his inward and secret Courts. Thus they that *die in the Lord* may be properly said to be gone to God; with whom, tho' they were before, yet they now enter into the secret of his *Tabernacle*, into the Retinue and Splendor of his *Glory*. But this manner of the divine Presence is reserv'd for the *Elect People of God*, and for their Portion in their Country.

God is, by *Grace* and *Benediction*, specially present in holy Places, and in the solemn *Assemblies* of his *Servants*. If holy People meet in *Grotts* and *Denns* of the Earth, when *Persecution* or a publick Necessity disturbs the *publick Order*, *Circumstances*, and *Convenience*, God fails not to come thither to them; but God is also by the same, or a greater Reason, present there where they meet ordinarily, by Order and publick Authority. There God is present ordinarily; he will go out of his way to meet his *Saints*, when themselves are forc'd out of their way of Order by a sad Necessity; but else God's usual way is to be present in those Places where his *Servants* are appointed ordinarily to meet. However, his Presence there signifies nothing more than a readiness to hear their Prayers, to bless their Persons, to accept their Offices, and to like even the

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Circumstance of orderly and publick Meeting.

God is especially present in the *Hearts* of his *People*, by his holy Spirit. Indeed the *Hearts* of holy Men and Women are *Temples* in the Truth of Things, and in Type and Shadow they are Heaven itself. For God reigns in the *Hearts* of his Servants, there is his Kingdom: The Power of Grace has subdu'd all his Enemies, there is his Power: They serve him Night and Day, and give him Thanks and Praise, that is his Glory. The *Temple* itself is the Heart of Man, *Christ* is the High Priest, who from thence sends up the Incense of Prayers, joyns them to his own Intercession, and presents all together to his Father. The *Holy Ghost*, by his dwelling there, has also consecrated it into a *Temple*. God dwells in our *Hearts* by *Faith*, *Christ* by his *Spirit*, and the *Spirit* by his *Purities*. Thus we are also Cabinets of the mysterious *Trinity*; and what is this short of *Heaven* itself, but as *Infancy* is short of *Manhood*, and *Letters* of *Words*? The same State of Life it is, but not the same Age: 'Tis Heaven in a Looking-Glass, dark but yet true, representing the Beauties of the *Soul*, the Grace of *God*, and the Images of his eternal *Glory*, by the reality of a special Presence.

God is especially present in the Consciences of all Persons, good and bad, by way of Testimony and Judgment. He is there a *Remembrancer* to call our Actions to Mind, a *Witness* to bring them to Judgment, and a *Judge* to acquit or to condemn. Tho' this manner of *Presence* is in this Life imperfect, after the manner of this Life, and we forget many of our Actions, yet the greatest Changes of our State of Grace or Sin, our most considerable Actions, are always present, like *Capital Letters* to an aged and dim Eye. At the Day of Judgment, God shall draw aside the *Cloud*, manifest this manner of his *Presence* more notoriously, and make it appear he was an *Observer* of our very Thoughts; that he only laid those things by, which because we covered them with Dust and Negligence, were not then discern'd, but when we are risen from our Dust and Imperfection, they will all appear plain and legible.

Now the Consideration of this great Truth is of a very universal Use, in the whole Course of the Life of a *Christian*: All the Consequents and Effects of it are universal. He who remembers that God stands a *Witness* and a *Judge*, beholding every secret act of *Impiety*, must be harden'd in Impudence if he be not much restrain'd in his Temptation to *Sin*. For the greatest part
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of Sin is taken away, if a Man has a Witness of his Conversation; and he is a great Despiser of God, who sends a Boy away when he is going to commit Fornication, and yet will do it tho' he knows God is present, and cannot be sent off: As if the *Eye* of a little Boy was more awful than the all-seeing Eye of God. He is to be fear'd in *publick*, he is to be fear'd in *private*: If you go forth he spies you, if you go in he sees you, when you light the Candle he observes you, when you put it out then also God marks you. Be sure that while you are in his sight, you behave your self as becomes so holy a Presence: But if you will sin, retire your self wisely, and go where God cannot see you, for no where else can you be safe. Certainly, if Men wou'd always actually consider, and really esteem this Truth, that God is the great *Eye* of the World, always watching over our Actions, and hath an ever-open *Ear* to hear all our Words, and an unweary'd *Arm* ever lifted up to crush a *Sinner* into Ruin, it wou'd be the readiest way in the World to make Sin to cease from among the Children of Men, and for Men to approach to the blessed Estate of the *Saints* in *Heaven*, who cannot sin, for they always walk in the *Presence*, and behold the Face of God.

Say with your self, as *David* did, *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither*

shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my Bed in Hell, thou art there. This Thought, by being frequent, will beget an habitual Dread and Reverence towards God, and Care in all your Actions: For it is a great Obligation and Engagement to act unblameably, when we act before the Judge who is infallible in his Sentence, all-knowing in his Information, severe in his Anger, powerful in his Providence, and intolerable in his Wrath and Indignation.

In the beginning of religious Actions, make an Act of *Adoration*, that is, solemnly worship God, place your self in God's Presence, and behold him with the Eye of Faith. Let your Desires fix on him as the Object of your *Worship*, the Reason of your *Hope*, and the Fountain of your *Blessings*. For when you have placed your self before him, and kneeled in his Presence, it is most likely all the following Parts of your *Devotion* will be answerable to the Wisdom of such an Apprehension, and the Glory of such a Presence. Let every thing you see, represent to your Spirit the Presence, the Excellency, and the Power of God. Let your Conversation with the *Creatures* lead you to the *Creator*; for so shall all your Actions be done more frequently, with an actual Eye to God's Presence, by your often seeing him

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in the *Glass* of the *Creation*. In the *Face* of the *Sun* you may see God's *Beauty*, in the *Fire* you may feel his *Heat* warming, in the *Water* his *Gentleness* to refresh you: He it is that comforts your *Spirits* when you have taken *Cordials*, and it is the *Dew* of *Heaven* that makes your *Field* give you *Bread*. This *Philosophy*, which is obvious to every *Man's* *Experience*, is a good *Advantage* to our *Piety*, and by this *Act* of *Understanding*, our *Wills* are check'd from *Violence* and *Misdemeanor*.

In your *Retirement* make frequent *Colloquies*, or short *Discourses*, between *God* and your own *Soul*; *Seven times a Day* did *David* praise him, and in the *night Season* also did he think upon him while he was waking. Every *Act* of *Complaint* or *Thanksgiving*, every *Act* of *Rejoycing* or of *Mourning*, every *Petition*, and every *Return* of the *Heart* in these *Intercourses*, is a going to *God*, and appearing in his *Presence*. This was long since by a *spiritual Person* call'd, *A building to God a Chapel in our Hearts*. It reconciles *Charity* and *Religion*, the *Necessities* of our *Calling*, and the *Employments* of *Devotion*: For thus, amidst the *Works* for supplying the *Wants* of human *Life*, you may retire into your *Chapel*, your *Heart*, and converse with *God* by frequent *Addresses* and *Prayers*.

Represent and offer to God Acts of *Love* and *Fear*, which are the proper Effects of this Apprehension, and the proper Exercise of this Consideration. For as God is every where *present* by his Power, he calls for *Reverence* and *Godly Fear*: As he is present to you in all your *Needs*, and relieves them, he deserves your *Love*. And since in every Action of our Lives, we find one or other of these apparent, and in most things see both, it is a proper and proportionate Return, that to every such *Demonstration* of God, we express ourselves sensible of it, by admiring his Divine Goodness, or trembling at his Presence; ever obeying him because we love him, and never disobeying him because we fear to offend him.

Let us remember, that God is in us, and that we are in him. We are his *Workmanship*, let us not *deface* it: We are in his *Presence*, let us not pollute it by unholy and impure Actions. *God hath also wrought all our Works in us.* And because he rejoices in his own Works, if we defile them, and make them unpleasant to him, we walk perversely with God, and he will walk crookedly towards us.

God is in the Bowels of your *Brother*; refresh them when he needs it, and then you give your *Alms* in the Presence of God,
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and to God; who feels the *Relief* which you provide for your *Brother*.

God is in every Place; suppose it therefore to be a *Church*; and that Decency of Deportment, and Piety of Carriage, which you are taught by *Religion*, or by Custom, or by Purity and publick Manner to use in *Churches*, the same use in all *Places*; with this Difference only, that in *Churches* let your Deportment be religious, in external Forms and Circumstances also; but there and every where let it be religious, in abstaining from Spiritual Indecencies, and in readiness to do good Actions; that it may not be said of you, as God once complain'd of his *People*, *Why hath my Beloved done Wickedness in my House?*

God is in every Creature; be cruel towards none, neither abuse any by *Intemperance*. Remember that the Creatures, and every Member of this our Body, is one of the lesser Cabinets and Receptacles of God. They are such as God has blest with his *Presence*, hallow'd by his Touch, and separated from unholy Use, by making them to belong to his Dwelling.

He walks as in the Presence of God, that converses with him in frequent Prayer and frequent Communion, that runs to him in all his Necessities, that asks Counsel of him in all his Doubtings, that opens all his Wants

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to him, that weeps before him for his Sins, that asks Remedies and Supports for his Weakness, that hears him as a *Judge*, and reverences him as a *Lord*, obeys him as a *Father*, and loves him as a Patron.

This Exercise of considering the Divine *Presence* is an excellent Help to *Prayer*, producing in us Reverence and Awfulness to the divine *Majesty* of God, and actual Devotion in our Offices.

It also produces a Confidence in God, and Fearlessness of our Enemies; Patience in trouble, and *hope* of *Remedy*; since God is so nigh in all our sad Accidents; he is a Disposer of the Hearts of Men, and even of things; he proportions out our Tryals, and supplies us with Remedies; and where his *Rod* strikes us, his *Staff* supports us. To which we may add this, that God, who is always with us, is especially by Promise in *Tribulation*, to turn the *Misery* into a *Mercy*, and that our greatest Trouble may become our Advantage, by entitling us to a new Manner of the Divine *Presence*.

It is apt to produce Joy and Rejoycing in God, we being more apt to delight in the Partners and Witnesses of our Conversation. Every Degree of mutual abiding and conversing, being a Relation and an Endearment: We are of the same Household with God: He is with us, in our natural Acti-
ons

ons to preserve us, in our Recreations to restrain us, in our publick Actions to applaud or reprove us, in our private to observe us, in our Sleep to watch by us, in our Watchings to refresh us: And if we walk with God in all his Ways, as he walks with us in all *ours*, we shall find perpetual Reasons to enable us to keep that *Rule* of his, *Rejoyce in the Lord always; and again, I say, Rejoyce*: Which puts me in mind of a Saying of an old religious Person, *There is one way of overcoming our ghostly Enemies, spiritual Mirth, and a continual bearing of God in our Minds*. This effectually resists the Devil, and suffers us to receive no hurt from him.

This Exercise is apt also to *kindle holy Desires of the Enjoyment of God*; because it produces Joy when we do enjoy him; the same Desires that a *weak Man* has for a *Defender*, the *sick Man* for a *Physician*, the *Poor* for a *Patron*, the *Child* for his *Father*, the *Bride* for her *Bridegroom*.

From the same Fountain are apt to issue, *Humility of Spirit*, Apprehensions of our great Distance, and our great Needs, our daily Wants, and hourly Supplies, and Admiration of God's unspeakable Mercies: It is the Cause of great Modesty and Decency in our Actions; it helps Recollection of Mind, and restrains the Scatterings and Looseness of wandring Thoughts; it establishes

blishes the Heart in good Purposes, and leads on to Perseverance; it gains Purity and Perfection, according to the Saying of God to *Abraham*, *Walk before me and be perfect; with holy Fear, and holy Love*, and indeed every thing that pertains to a holy Life. When we see our selves plac'd in the Eye of God, who sets us to work, and will reward us plenteously, to serve him with an *Eye Service* is not very pleasing, for he also sees the Heart: And the want of this Consideration was declar'd to be the Cause why *Israel* sinn'd so grievously: *For they say, the Lord hath forsaken the Earth, and the Lord seeth not; therefore the Land is full of Blood, and the City full of Perverseness.* What a Child wou'd do in the Eye of his *Father*, and a *Pupil* before his *Tutor*, and a *Wife* in the *Presence* of her *Husband*, and a *Servant* in the *Sight* of his *Master*; let us always do the same, for *we are made a Spectacle to God, to Angels and to Men.* We are always in the *Sight* and *Presence* of the *All-seeing* and *Almighty God*, who is also to us a *Father* and a *Guardian*, a *Husband* and a *Lord*.

Tho' from what has been already said, Persons of both Sexes may form a very lively and edifying Idea of *Religion*, and especially *Christianity*; yet since there can never be too much of Life and Edification in such a Subject, we shall carry our Reflecti-

on still farther, both in *Generals* and *Particulars*.

Religion, in a large Sense, signifies the whole Duty of Man, comprehending in it *Justice*, *Charity*, and *Sobriety*; because all these being commanded by God, they become a part of that Honour and Worship which we are bound to pay to him. 'Tis, in a more restrain'd Sense, taken for that part of Duty, which particularly relates to God, in our *Worship* and *Adoration* of him; in confessing his Excellencies, loving his Person, admiring his Goodness, believing his Word, and doing all that which may, in a proper and direct manner, *do him Honour*. It contains the Duties of the first Table only, and the *internal* Actions of *Religion*, in which the Soul only is employ'd, and Ministers to God, in the special Actions of *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*.

Faith believes the *Revelations* of God, *Hope* expects his *Promises*, and *Charity* loves his Excellencies and *Mercies*. *Faith* gives our Understanding to God, *Hope* gives up all the Passions and Affections to Heaven and heavenly things, and *Charity* gives the Will to the Service of God. *Faith* is oppos'd to *Infidelity*, *Hope* to *Despair*, and *Charity* to *Enmity* and *Hostility*; and these three sanctifie the whole Man, and make our Duty to God, and Obedience to his

Com-

Commandments, to be willing, reasonable, and delightful, and therefore to be entire, persevering, and universal.

The Acts and Offices of Faith are, To believe every thing which God has reveal'd to us; and when once we are convinc'd that God has spoken it, to make no farther Enquiry, but humbly to submit, ever remembring, that there are some things, which our Understanding cannot fathom, nor search out their Depth.

To believe nothing concerning God, but what is honourable and excellent; as knowing that *Belief* to be no honouring of God, which entertains of him any dishonourable Thoughts. *Faith* is the Parent of *Charity*, and whatsoever *Faith* entertains, must be apt to produce love to God. But he that believes God to be Cruel or Unmerciful, or to rejoyce in the unavoidable Damnation of the greatest part of Mankind, or that he speaks one thing and privately means another, thinks evil Thoughts concerning God, and such as for which we shou'd hate a Man, and therefore are great Enemies of *Faith*, and apt to destroy *Charity*. Our *Faith* concerning God, must be as himself has reveal'd and describ'd his own Excellencies; and in our Discourses we must remove from him all Imperfection, and attribute to him all Excellency.

To

To give our selves wholly up to *Christ* in *Heart* and *Desire*, to become Disciples of his Doctrine by *Choice* besides *Conviction*, being in the *Presence* of God but as *Idiots*, without any Principles of our own to hinder the Truth of God, but sucking in greedily all that God has taught us, believing it infinitely, and loving to believe it. For this is an Act of *Love* reflected upon *Faith*, or an Act of *Faith* leaning upon *Love*.

To believe all God's Promises, and that whatsoever is promis'd in Scripture, shall on God's part be as surely perform'd, as if we had it in *possession*. This Act makes us to rely upon God with the same Confidence, as we did on our Parents when we were *Children*, when we made no doubt, but whatsoever we needed we shou'd have, if it were in their Power.

To believe also the Conditions of the *Promise*, or that part of the *Revelation* which concerns our *Duty*: Many are apt to believe the Article of *Remission* of Sins, but they believe it without the Condition of *Repentance*, or the Fruits of a *holy Life*; which is to believe the *Article* otherwise than God intended it. For the *Covenant* of the *Gospel* is the great Object of *Faith*, and that supposes our *Duty* to answer his *Grace*; that God will be our God so long as we are his People. The other is not *Faith* but *Flattery*.

To

To *profess* publickly the *Doctrine* of *Jesus Christ*, openly owning whatsoever he has *reveal'd* and commanded; not being asham'd of the Word of God, or of any Practices enjoin'd by it; and this without complying with any Man's Interest, not regarding Favour, nor being mov'd with good Words; not fearing Disgrace, or Loss, or Inconvenience, or Death it self.

To *Pray* without Doubting, without Weariness, without Faintness, entertaining no Jealousies or Suspensions of God, but being confident of God's hearing us, and of his Returns to us, whatever the Matter or the Instance be; that if we do our Duty, he will be gracious and merciful.

These are the *Acts of Faith*. The *Signs* are,

An *earnest* and *vehement Prayer*: For it is impossible we shou'd heartily believe the things of God, and the Glories of the Gospel, and not most importunately desire them: For every thing is desir'd, according to our Belief of its Excellency and Possibility.

To do nothing for *vain Glory*, but wholly for the Interests of *Religion*.

To be content with God for our Judge, for our Patron, for our Lord, for our Friend; desiring God to be all in all to us, as we are in our Understandings and Affections wholly his.

To

To have all our Thoughts and principal Desires fix'd upon the Matters of *Truth*, the things of Heaven. For if a Man were adopted *Heir* to *Cæsar*, he wou'd, if he *believ'd* it real and effective, be wholly at Court in his Father's Eye. His Desires wou'd out-run his swiftest Speed, and all his Thoughts wou'd spend themselves in creating Ideas and little fantastick Images of his future Condition. Now God has made us *Heirs* of his Kingdom, and Coheirs with Christ: If we *believ'd* this, we wou'd think, and act, and study accordingly.

But he that rejoyces in Gain, whose Heart dwells in the World, and is espous'd to a fair Estate; who is transported with a light momentary Joy, is afflicted with Losses, and amaz'd with temporal *Persecutions*; who esteems Disgrace or Poverty, in a good Cause, to be intolerable: This Man either has no Inheritance in Heaven, or believes none. He believes not that he is adopted to be the Son of God, the Heir of eternal Glory. *Shew me thy Faith by thy Works*, says the Apostle: *Faith* makes the Merchant diligent and adventurous, and that makes him rich. It is told us by Christ, He that *forgives shall be forgiven*. If we believe this, it is certain we shall forgive our Enemies; for none of us all but need to be forgiven. No Man can possibly despise or refuse

refuse such excellent *Glories*, as are reveal'd to them that are *Servants of Christ*; and yet we do nothing that is commanded us, as a Condition to obtain them. No Man cou'd work a Days Labour without *Faith*; but because he *believes* he shall have his *Wages* at the Days or Weeks end, if he does his *Duty*. But he only *believes*, who does that thing, which other Men in the like Cases do, when they do *believe*. He that *believes* Money gotten with Danger, is better than *Poverty* with Safety, will venture for it in unknown Lands or Seas; and so will he that *believes* 'tis better to get Heaven with Labour, than to go to Hell with Pleasure.

He that *believes* does not make haste, but waits patiently till the *times of Refreshment* come, and dares trust God for the Morrow. He is no more solicitous for the next Year, than he is for that which is past. And it is certain that Man wants Faith, who dares be more confident of being supply'd when he has Money in his Purse, than when he has it only in Bills of Exchange from God; or that relies more upon his own Industry, than upon God's Providence, when his own Industry fails him. If you dare trust to God, when the Case to human Reason seems impossible, and trust to God then also out of Choice, not because you have nothing else to trust to, but because he is the only Support

port of a just Conscience, then you give a good Testimony of your *Faith*.

True *Faith* is *confident*, and will venture all the World upon the Strength of its Persuasion. Will you lay your Life on it, your Estate, your Reputation, that the Doctrine of *Jesus Christ* is true in every Article? Then you have true *Faith*: But he that fears Men more than God, *believes* Men more than he *believes* in God.

Faith, if it be true, living, and justifying, cannot be separated from a good *Life*: It works *Miracles*, makes a *Drunkard* become *sober*, a *lascivious* Person become *chaste*, a *covetous* Man become *liberal*: It *overcomes the World*, it works *Righteousness*, and makes us diligently to do, and chearfully to suffer, whatsoever God has plac'd in our way to Heaven.

I shall proceed to consider the Means and Instruments to obtain Faith. The first is an humble, willing and docible Mind, a Desire to be instructed in the way of God; for Persuasion enters like a *Sun-beam* gently, and without Violence; open but the Window and draw the Curtain, and the *Sun* of *Righteousness* will *enlighten* your *Darkness*.

Remove all Prejudice, and Love to every thing which may be contradicted by *Faith*.
How can ye believe, said Christ, that receive
Praise

Praise of one another? An unchaste Man cannot easily be brought to *believe*, that in chaste Purity he shall ever see God. He that loves *Riches*, can hardly *believe* the Doctrine of Poverty, and Renunciation of the World. *Alms*, *Martyrdom*, and the Doctrine of the *Cross*, is Folly to him that loves his *Ease* and *Pleasures*. He that has within him any Principles contrary to the Doctrines of *Faith*, cannot easily become a Disciple.

Prayer, which is instrumental in every thing, has a particular Promise in this, *He that lacks Wisdom let him ask it of God; and, if you give good things to your Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him?*

The Consideration of the Divine Omnipotence, and infinite Wisdom, and of our own Ignorance, are great Instruments of curing all Doubting, and silencing the Murmurs of *Infidelity*.

Avoid all Curiosity of inquiring into Particulars, and Circumstances of Mysteries: For true Faith is full of Ingenuity and hearty Simplicity, free from Suspicion, wise and confident, trusting upon *Generals*, without watching and prying into unnecessary or undiscernible *Particulars*. No Man carries his Bed into his Field to watch how his Corn grows, but *believes* upon the general Orders and Providence of
Na-

Nature, and at Harveſt finds himſelf not deceiv'd.

Be not buſie to diſpute in time of *Temp-tation*, but rely upon the Concluſion, and throw your ſelf upon God. Contend not with him but in Prayer, and in the Preſence, and with the Help of a prudent, and ſober *Guide*. Be ſure to eſteem all Changes of Faith, which offer themſelves in the time of your greateſt Weakneſs, contrary to the Perſuaſions of your beſt Underſtanding, to be *Temptations*, and reject them accordingly.

'Tis a prudent Courſe, that in our *Health* and beſt Advantages, we lay up particular Arguments and Grounds of Perſuaſion and Confidence, to be brought forth and us'd in the great Day of Expence; and that eſpecially in ſuch things in which we uſe to be moſt tempted, in which we are leaſt confident, which are moſt neceſſary, and which commonly the *Devil* uſes to aſſault us withal in the Days of our Viſitation.

The Difference between *Faith* and *Hope* conſiſts in this, that the Objects of *Faith* are all things reveal'd, good and bad, Rewards and Punishments, things paſt, preſent and to come; things that concern us, and things that concern us not: But *Hope* has for its Object, things only that are good, and fit to be hoped for, and reſpecting our ſelves; because

because these things are offer'd to us upon Conditions, of which we may so fail as we may change our Will; therefore our Certainty is less than the Adherences of Faith, which, because *Faith* relies upon one Proposition, that is, the Truth of the Word of God, cannot be made uncertain in themselves; whereas the Object of our Hope may become uncertain to us, with respect to our Attainment. For it is infallibly certain, that there is a *Heaven* for all the Godly, and for me among them all, if I do my Duty. But that I shall enter into Heaven is the Object of my *Hope*, not of my *Faith*, and is so sure, as it is certain I shall persevere in the ways of God.

The *Acts of Hope* are, To rely upon God, with a firm Expectation of his *Promises*, always esteeming every *Promise* of God as a Magazine of all that *Grace* and *Relief*, which we can need in that Instance for which the *Promise* is made.

To esteem all the Danger of an Action, the Possibilities of Miscarriages, and every cross Accident that can intervene, to be no Defect on God's part, but either a *Mercy* on his part, or a Fault on ours. For then we shall be sure to trust in God, when we see him to be our Confidence, and our selves the Cause of all Mischances.

To rejoyce in the midst of Misfortune, or seeming Sadness; knowing that this may
work

work for good, if we be not wanting to our selves. This is a direct Act of *Hope*, to look through the *Cloud* for a *Beam* of the *Light* from God, which is call'd in Scripture, *Rejoycing in Tribulation*, when the *Lord of Hope* fills us with all *Joy* in believing.

To desire to *Pray*, and to long for the great Object of our *Hope*, the mighty Price of our high Calling, and to desire the other things of this Life as they are promis'd, that is, so far as they are made necessary and useful to us, in order to God's *Glory*, and the great End of Souls. *Hope* and *Fasting* are said to be the two *Wings* of *Prayer*; *Fasting* is but as the *Wing* of a *Bird*, but *Hope* is like the *Wing* of an *Angel*, soaring up to *Heaven*, and bearing our *Prayers* to the *Throne* of *Grace*. Without *Hope* it is impossible to *pray*, but *Hope* makes our *Prayers* reasonable, passionate and religious; for it relies upon God's Promise, or the Experience of his Providence. *Prayer* is always in proportion to our *Hope*, zealous and affectionate.

Perseverance is the Perfection of *Hope*, and its last Act. So long as our *Hope* continues, so long we go on in Duty and Diligence.

The Rules to govern *Hope* are these following:

Let your *Hope* be moderate, proportion'd to your State, Persons and Condition, whether

it be for *Gifts*, or *Graces*, or temporal Favours. It is an ambitious Hope for Persons, whose Diligence exceeds not theirs that are least in the Kingdom of *Heaven*, to *believe themselves* as dear to God as the greatest *Saints*; or that they shall have a Throne equal with *St. Paul*, or the blessed Virgin *Mary*. Hope that God will crown your Endeavours with equal Measures of that Reward, which he indeed freely gives, but yet gives in proportion to your Endeavours. Hope for good Success according to, or not much beyond, the Efficacy of the Cause and the Instrument. Let the *Husbandman* hope for a good *Harvest*, not for a rich Kingdom, or a victorious Army.

Let your Hope be well-grounded, relying upon just Confidences; that is, upon God, according to his *Revelations* and *Promises*. For 'tis possible for a Man to have a vain Hope in God; and in Matters of *Religion*, it is Presumption to hope, that God's Mercies will be pour'd forth upon lazy Persons, that do nothing towards holy and strict Walking, that trust and long for an Event, besides and against all Application of the Means. Rely not in temporal things upon uncertain *Prophecies* and *Astrology*, not upon your own Wit or Industry, not upon Gold and Friends, not upon Armies and Princes. Trust not in Physicians for Health, who

who are but Men, and cannot always cure themselves. Use all lawful Means, but expect nothing from them above their natural or ordinary Efficacy; and in the use of them expect a Blessing from God. A *Hope* that is easy and credulous, is an *Arm of Flesh*, and will miserably disappoint us at last.

Let your *Hope* be without Vanity, sober, grave, and silent, fix'd in the Heart, not born upon the *Lip*; apt to support your Spirits within, but not provoke Envy abroad.

Let your *Hope* be of things possible, safe and useful. He who *hopes* for an Opportunity of acting his *Revenge*, or *Lust*, or *Rapine*, watches to do himself a Mischief. All Evils incident to our selves, or Brethren, are Objects of our *Fear*, not *Hope*. And when we truly understand them, things useless and unsafe can no more be wish'd for, than things impossible can be obtain'd.

Let your *Hope* be *patient*, without weariness of Spirit, or hastiness in point of Time. Make no Limits or Prescriptions to God, but let your Prayers and Endeavours go on still, with a constant Attendance on the Methods of divine Providence. The Men of *Bethulia* resolv'd to wait upon God but *five Days* longer, but *Deliverance* stay'd *seven Days*, and yet came at last. Take not

every Accident for an Argument of *Despair*, but go on still in *hoping*, and begin again to work, if any ill Accident has interrupted you.

The *Means* to cure *Despair*, and to continue or increase in *Hope*, are partly by *Consideration*, partly by *Exercise*.

Apply your Mind to cure all the proper Causes of *Despair*, which are *Weakness* of Spirit, or *Violence* of *Passion*. He who covets greedily, is impatient of *Delay*, and desperate in cross Accidents. He who is little of *Heart*, is also little of *Hope*, and apt to be *melancholy* and *suspicious*.

Despise the things of the World, and be indifferent to all Changes and Events of *Providence*: And for the things of God, the *Promises* are sure to be perform'd in kind. Where there is less Variety of Chance, there is less Possibility of being disappointed. But he who creates to himself thousands of little *Hopes*, uncertain in the *Promise*, and fallacious in the Event, depending upon ten thousand Circumstances, as are all the things of this World, shall often fail in his Expectations, and be apt to distrust *Providence* at last.

So long as your *Hopes* are regular and reasonable in temporal Affairs, such as are *Deliverances* from *Enemies*, escaping a *Storm* or *Ship-wreck*, recovery from *Sickness*, *Ability*

to pay your *Debts*, and the like; Remember, there are some things *ordinary*, and some things *extraordinary* to prevent *Despair*. In *ordinary*, remember that the very *hoping* in God, is an endearment of him, and a means to obtain his Blessing. *I will deliver him because he hath put his trust in me.* There are in God all those glorious Attributes and Excellencies, which in the nature of things, can possibly create or confirm *Hope*; he is *strong, wise, true, loving*: There cannot be added another Capacity to create a Confidence; for upon these Premisses we cannot fail of receiving what is fit for us. God has oblig'd himself by *Promise*, that we shall have the good of every thing we desire; for even Losses and Disappointments shall *work for the good of them that fear God*. If we will trust the Truth of God for Performance of the *Generals*, we may well trust his Wisdom to chuse for us the *Particulars*: But the *Extraordinary* ways of God are apt to supply the Defect of all natural and human Possibilities. God has in many Instances given extraordinary Virtue to the second Causes and Instruments, he has given excellent *Spirit* and *Vigour* to the *Sufferers*, arming them with strange Courage, heroick Fortitude, invincible Resolution, and glorious Patience. His Providence produces strange things beyond common Rules; he who led *Israel* thro' a *Sea*,

who made a *Rock* pour forth Waters, the *Heavens* to give them Bread and Flesh, and whole *Armies* to be destroy'd with fantastick Noises, can do what he pleases, and still retains the same Affections for his People, and the same Providence over Mankind as ever. It is impossible for that Man to *despair*, who remembers that his *Helper is Omnipotent*, infinitely *loving*, and infinitely *wise*, chusing better for us than we can for our selves. This in all Ages and Chances has supported the afflicted People of God, and carry'd them on dry Ground thro' a red Sea. God invites and cherishes the *Hopes* of Men by all the variety of his Providence.

If your Case be brought to the last Extremity, and you are even at the very brink of the Grave, yet then *despair* not; at least, wait a little longer; and remember that whatsoever final Accident takes away all *Hope* from you, if you stay a little longer, and in the mean while bear it patiently, it will also take away all *Despair* too; for when you enter into the Regions of *Death*, you rest from all your *Labours* and your *Fears*.

Let them who are tempted to *despair* of their *Salvation*, consider how much Christ suffered to redeem us from Sin and its eternal Punishment. He who considers this, must needs believe, that the Desires which God had to save us, were not less than infinite,
and

and therefore not easily to be satisfy'd without effecting it.

Let no Man *despair* of God's Mercies to forgive him, unless he be sure that his Sins be greater than God's Mercies; if they be not, we have much Reason to *hope*, that the stronger Ingredients will prevail, so long as we are in the day and state of *Repentance*, within the Possibility and Latitude of the *Covenant*; and as long as any *Promise* can but reflect upon him with an oblique *Beam* of Comfort, possibly the Man may err in his Judgment of Circumstances, and therefore let him *fear*; but because it is not certain he is mistaken, let him not *despair*.

Consider, that tho' God knows all the Events of Men, and what their final Condition shall be, who shall be sav'd, and who shall perish; ye he treats them as his own, calls them to be his own, offers fair Conditions as to his own, gives them Blessings, Arguments of Mercy, and Instances of *Fear* to deter them from *Death*, and call them home to *Life*; all which shews no Cause of *Despair* to them; therefore much less shou'd any Man *despair* for himself, since he was never able to read the Scrolls of eternal *Predestination*.

Remember that *Despair* belongs only to passionate Fools or *Villains*, such as were *Achitophel* and *Judas*; or else to *Devils* and

damn'd Persons. And as the *Hope* of *Salvation* is a good Disposition towards it, so is *Despair* a certain Consignation to eternal Ruin. A Man may be *damn'd* for *despairing* to be *sav'd*. *Despair* is the proper Passion of *Damnation*. God has plac'd *Truth* and *Felicity* in *Heaven*, *Consideration* and *Repentance* upon *Earth*, but *Misery* and *Despair* are the Portion of *Hell*.

Have always in mind the *Promises* of God, and the *Remembrances*, the Experience, the former Senses of the divine Favours; that thence you may argue from times *past* to the *present*, and enlarge to the future, and to greater Blessings. For tho' the Conjectures and Expectations of *Hope*, are not like the Conclusions of *Faith*, yet they are a Defence against the Searchings of *Despair* in temporal things, and an Anchor of the Soul, sure and stedfast, against the Fluctuations of the Spirit in Matters of Salvation. God has preserv'd me from many Sins, may I argue with my self, and his Mercies are infinite; I *hope* he will still preserve me from many more. I have sinn'd, and God smote me not, his Mercies are still over the *Penitent*; I *hope* he will deliver me from all the Evils I have deserv'd. He has forgiven me many Sins of *Malice*, and therefore surely he will pity my Infirmities. God visited my Heart and changed it. He loves the Work of his

own

own Hand; and such my Heart is now become; I *hope* he will love this too. When I repented, he receiv'd me graciously, and therefore I *hope*, if I do my Endeavour, he will totally forgive me. He help'd my slow and weak Beginnings, and therefore I *hope* he will lead me to Perfection. When he had given me something first, then he gave me more; I *hope* therefore he will keep me from falling, and give me the Grace of *Perseverance*. He has chosen me to be a Disciple of *Christ's* Institution, he has elected me to his Kingdom of *Grace*, and therefore I *hope* also to see his Kingdom of *Glory*. He dy'd for me when I was his Enemy, and therefore I *hope* he will save me, when he has reconcil'd me to himself, and is become my Friend. *God has given us his Son, how shall he not with him give us all things else?*

Take you care only of your Duty, of the Means and proper Instruments of your Work, and leave the End to God. Lay that up with him, and he will take care of all that is entrusted with him; which being an Act of Confidence in God, is also a Means of Security to you.

By special Acts of spiritual Prudence and Reasoning, secure the confident *Belief* of the *Resurrection*, and you cannot but *hope* for every thing else, which you may reasonably

nably expect, or lawfully desire, upon the Stock of the divine Mercies and Promises.

If *Despair* seizes you in a particular temporal Instance, let it not defile your Soul with impure Mixture, or blend with your spiritual Considerations; but rather let it make you establish your Soul in Matters of *Religion*, that by being thrown out of your earthly *Dwelling* and Confidence, you may retire into the *Strengths* of *Grace*, and *hope* the more strongly in that, by how much you are the more defeated in this, that *despair* of good Fortune, or Success, may become the necessary Spur to all Virtue.

Enough has been said of *Faith* and *Hope*: We come now to *Charity*, or the *Love* of God. Love is the greatest thing he can give us, and the greatest thing we can give to God; for God himself is *Love*. *Charity* is the old, the new, and the great Commandment. It is indeed all the Commandments, for it is the *fulfilling of the Law*. It does the Work of all other *Graces*, without any Instrument but its own immediate Virtue. For as the *love* of Sin makes a Man sin against all his own Reason, all the Discourses of Wisdom, all the Advices of his Friends, without Temptation, and without Opportunity; so does the *Love* of God make a Man chaste, without the laborious Acts of Fasting and exterior Discipline, temperate
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in the midst of *Feasts*, and active enough to chuse it without intermediate Appetites. It reaches at *Glory* thro' the very Heart of *Grace*, without any other Aims but those of *Love*. It is a *Grace* that loves God for himself, and our Neighbours for his sake. The Consideration of God's Goodness and Bounty, the Experience of those profitable and excellent Emanations from him, may be, and most commonly are, the first *Motive of our Love*; but when we are once enter'd, and have tasted the Goodness of God, we love the Spring for its own Excellency, passing from *Passion* to *Reason*, from Thinking to Adoring, from Sense to Spirit, from Self-love to an Union with God; this is the Image, and little Representation of *Heaven*. It is *Beatitude* in *Picture*, or rather the *Infancy* and *Beginnings* of *Glory*.

We need no Incentives, by way of special Enumeration, to move us to the Love of God; for we cannot love any thing, for any Excellence, real or imaginary, but that Excellence is infinitely more eminent in God. There can but two things create Love, *Perfection* and *Usefulness*; to which answer on our part, *Admiration* and *Desire*, both which are centred in *Love*. For the Entertainment of *Admiration*, there is in God an *infinite Nature*, *Immensity* or *Vastness*, without *Extensi-*

on or Limits, Immutability, Eternity, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Holiness, Dominion, Providence, Bounty, Mercy, Justice, Perfection. He is the Original of all Things, and the End also to which all Things, and all Actions must be directed, and will at last arrive. The Consideration of which may be heighten'd, if we consider our Distances from all these *Glories*. Our smallness and limited Nature, our Nothing, our Inconstancy, our Age like a Span, our Weakness and Ignorance, our Poverty, our Inadvertency and Inconsideration, our Disabilities and Disaffections to do good, our harsh Natures and unmerciful Inclinations, our universal Iniquity, and our Necessities and Dependencies, not only on *God* originally and essentially, but even our need of the meanest of *God's* Creatures, and our being obnoxious to the weakest and most contemptible. But for the Entertainment of *Desire* we may consider, that in him is a *Torrent* of *Pleasure* for the *Voluptuous*: He is the *Fountain* of Honour for the *Ambitious*, an inexhaustible *Treasure* for the *Covetous*. Our vicious Hearts are in love with fantastick Pleasures, and Images of Perfections, which are truly and really no where to be found but in *God*. Our *Virtues* therefore have such proper Objects, that it is but reasonable they shou'd all turn into Love; for certain it is, that

that this Love will turn all into Virtue. As to the Acts of Love to God, Obedience is the chief: *This is Love, that we keep his Commandments.*

Love does all things which may please the *beloved* Person: It is also sedulous and inquisitive in the Instances of its Expression.

Love gives away all things to advance the Interest of the Person *beloved*: It relieves all that he wou'd have reliev'd, and spends itself in such real *Significations* as it is enabled withal. He never lov'd God that will quit any thing of his *Religion* to save his *Money*: Love is always liberal and communicative.

It suffers all things that are impos'd by its *Beloved*, or that can happen for his sake, or that intervene in his Service, chearfully, sweetly, willingly, expecting that God shou'd turn them into Good, and Instruments of Felicity. Love is patient, and content with any thing.

Love also is impatient of any thing that may displease the *beloved* Person, hating all Sin as the Enemy of its Friend; for Love contracts all the same Relations, the same Friendships, and the same Hatreds. All Affection to Sin is perfectly inconsistent with the Love of God. Love is not divided between God and God's Enemies: We must love God with all our Heart, give him a whole and undivided Affection, having Love
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for nothing else but such things as he allows, and which he commands or *loves* himself.

Love endeavours for ever to be present, to converse with, to enjoy, to be united with its Object; loves to be talking of him, reciting his Praises, repeating his Words, imitating his Gestures, transcribing his Copy in every thing: And every Degree of Union, and every Degree of Liking, is a Degree of *Love*, which can endure any thing but the Absence and the Displeasure of the *Beloved*. For we are not to use *God* and *Religion* as Men use *Perfumes*, with which they are delighted when they have them, but can very well be without them. True *Charity* is restless till it enjoys *God* in such Instances in which it wants him. It is like *Hunger* and *Thirst*, it must be *fed* or it cannot be answered. Nothing can supply the Presence, or make *Recompence* for the Absence of *God*, or of the Effects of his Favour, and the Light of his Countenance.

True *Love*, in all Accidents, looks upon the Person *below'd*, and observes his Countenance, and how he approves or disapproves it, and accordingly looks sad or cheerful. He who loves *God* is not displeas'd at those Accidents which *God* chuses, nor murmurs at those Changes which he makes in his Family,

mily, nor envies at those Gifts he bestows; but chuses as he likes, and is rul'd by his Judgment: Is perfectly of his Persuasion, *loving* to learn where God is the Teacher, and being content to be ignorant or silent, where he is not pleas'd to open himself.

Love is curious in little Things, or Circumstances, or Measures, and little Accidents, not allowing to itself any Infirmary which it strives not to master, aiming at what it cannot reach, desiring to be of an Angelical *Purity*, of a perfect Innocence, a Seraphical Fervour, and fears every Image of Offence: Is as much afflicted at an idle Word as some at an Act of *Adultery*, and will not allow itself so much Anger as will disturb a *Child*, nor endure the Impurity of a *Dream*. This is the Curiosity and Niceness of *Divine Love*; this is the Fear of God, and is the Daughter and Production of *Love*.

But because this Passion is pure as the brightest and smoothest Mirror, and therefore is apt to be sully'd with every impure Breath, we must be careful that our *Love* to God be governed by these Rules and Measures.

That it be sweet, even, and full of Tranquility, having in it no Violences or Transports, but going on in a Course of holy Actions and Duties, which are proportionable

nable to our Condition and present State; not to satisfy all the *Desire*, but all the Proportions and Measures of our Strength. A new Beginner in *Religion* has passionate and violent Desires, but they must not be the Measure of his Actions. He must consider his Strength, his late Sickness and State of Death, the proper Temptation of his Condition; and stand at first upon his Defence; not go to storm a strong Fort, or attack a potent Enemy, or do heroick Actions, fitter for *Giants* in *Religion*. Indiscreet Violences, and untimely Forwardness, are the *Rocks* of *Religion*, against which tender Spirits often suffer Shipwreck.

Let your *Love* be prudent, and without Illusion; let it express itself in such Instances as God has chosen, or which we chuse our selves, by Proportion to his Rules and Measures. *Love* turns into *doting* when *Religion* turns into *Superstition*. No Degree of *Love* can be imprudent, but the Expressions may: We cannot *love* God too much, but we may proclaim it in indecent manners.

Let your *Love* be firm, constant and inseparable; not coming and returning like the *Tide*, but descending like a never-failing *River*, ever running into the *Ocean* of Divine Excellency, passing on in the *Channel* of Duty and constant Obedience, and never ceasing to be what it is, till it comes to
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what it desires to be ; being still a *River* till it be turned into *Sea* and Vastness, even the Immensity of a blessed *Eternity*.

Tho' the Consideration of the divine Excellencies and Mercies be infinitely sufficient to produce in us *Love* to God, yet that we may the better kindle and encrease our *Love* to him, we must cut off all earthly and sensual *Loves*, for they pollute and unhallow the pure and spiritual *Love*. Every Degree of inordinate Affection to the things of this World, and every Act of *Love* to a Sin, is a perfect Enemy to the *Love* of God. And it is great Shame to take any part of our Affection from the eternal God, to bestow it upon a *Creature*, in Defiance of its *Creator* ; or to give it to the *Devil*, our open Enemy, in Disparagement of him who is the Fountain of all Excellencies, and celestial Amities.

Lay *Fetters* and *Restraints* upon the imaginative and fantastick part, because our Fancy being an imperfect and lighter Faculty, is usually pleas'd with Entertainment of Shadows ; and because the things of the World fill it with such *Beauties*, and fantastick *Imagery*, it presents such Objects as amiable to the Affections, and elective Powers. Persons of Fancy, such as are *Women* and *Children*, have always the most violent *Loves*. But then, if we be careful with what
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Images we fill our *Fancies*, we may the sooner rectifie our *Loves*. To this Purpose it is good that we transplant the Instruments of *Fancy* into *Religion*; for which Reason *Musick* was brought into *Churches*, together with Ornaments, Perfumes, comely Garments, Solemnities, and decent *Ceremonies*, that the busie and less-discerning *Fancy* being brib'd with its proper Objects, may be instrumental to a more celestial and spiritual *Love*.

Remove Solicitude or worldly Cares, and Multitudes of secular Businessses; for if these take up the Intention and actual Application of our Thoughts, and Meditations, they will also possess our Passions; which, if they be fill'd with one Object, tho' ignoble, cannot attend another, tho' more excellent. We always contract a Friendship and Relation with those with whom we converse. Our very Country is dear to us for our being in it, and the Neighbours of the same Village, and those that buy and sell with us, have seiz'd upon some Portions of our *Love*. Wherefore, if we dwell in the Affairs of the World, we shall also grow in *love* with them; and all our *Love*, or all our *Hatred*, all our *Hopes*, or all our *Fears*, which the eternal God would graciously secure to himself, and esteem a-

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mong his Treasures and precious Things, shall be spent upon Trifles and Vanities.

Do not only chuse the things of God, but secure your Inclinations, and Aptnesses for God, and for *Religion*. It will be a hard thing for a Man to do such a personal Violence to his first Desires, as to chuse whatsoever he has no Mind to. A Man will many times satisfy the Importunity, and daily Sollicitations of his first Longings. There is nothing therefore that can secure our *Love to God*, but stopping the natural Fountains, and making *Religion* to grow near the first Desires of the Soul.

Converse with God by frequent *Prayer*; in particular pray that your *Desires* may be right, and *love* to have your Affections regular and holy. To which purpose make frequent Ejaculations and Communions, and an assiduous daily Devotion. Discover to him all your Wants, complain to him of all your Affronts, lay your Misfortunes and all your ill News before him: Call to him for *Health*, run to him for Counsel, beg of him for Pardon. It is as natural to *love him* to whom we make such Addresses, and of whom we have such Dependencies, as it is for *Children* to *love* their *Parents*.

Consider the Immensity and Vastness of the divine *Love* to us, express in all the Emanations of his Providence, in his *Creations*.

on, in his *Preservation* of us. For it is not my Prince or my Patron, or my Friend that supports me, or relieves my Needs, but God who made the Corn that my Friend sends me; who created the Grapes, and supported him who has as many Dependencies, and as many natural Necessities, and as perfect Disabilities as my self. God indeed made him the Instrument of his Providence to me, as he has made his own Land, or his own Cattle to him, with this only Difference, that God by his Ministration to me, intends to bestow on him a Favour and Reward, which to natural Instruments he does not.

The least *Love* to God that is, must be obedient, pure, simple, and communicative: It must exclude all Affection to Sin, and all inordinate Affection to the World: It must be expressive, according to our Power, in the Instances of Duty; and must be *Love* for *Love's* sake. And of this *Love*, *Martyrdom* is the highest Instance, that is, a Readiness of Mind rather to suffer any Evil than to do any. Of this our blessed Saviour affirm'd, *That no Man had greater Love*. This is the highest Point of Duty, the greatest Love that God requires of Man, and yet he that is imperfect must have this *Love* also in Preparation of Mind, and must differ from another in nothing, except in the Degrees of Promptness and Alacrity. In this Sense,
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he who *loves* God truly, tho' but with a Beginning and tender *Love*, yet he *loves* God with all his *Heart*; that is, with that Degree of *Love* which is the highest Point of Duty, and of God's Charge upon us; and he that loves God with all his Heart, may yet encrease with the *Encrease of God*, just as there are Degrees of *Love to God* among the *Saints*, and each of them love him with all their Powers and Capacities.

The greater State of this Love is the *Zeal of Love*, which runs out into Excrescencies and Suckers, like a fruitful and pleasant Tree, bursting out into Gums, and producing Fruits, not of a monstrous, but of an extraordinary and heroick Greatness: Concerning which these Cautions are to be observed.

If Zeal be in the Beginnings of our spiritual *Birth*, or be short, sudden, and transient, or be a Consequent of a Man's natural Temper, or come upon any Cause, but after a long growth of a temperate and well-regulated Love, it is to be suspected for *Passion* and *Frowardness* rather than the vertical Point of Love.

That *Zeal* only is good, which, in a *fervent Love*, has temperate *Expressions*; for let the Affection boil as high as it can, yet if it boil over into irregular and strange Actions, it will have but few, but need many Excuses.

Excuses. *Elijah* was *zealous* for the Lord of Hosts, and yet he was so transported with it, that he cou'd not receive Answer from God, till by *Musick* he was recompos'd and tam'd: And *Moses* broke both the *Tables of the Law*, by being passionately *zealous* against them that broke the *first*.

Zeal must spend its greatest Heat, principally in those things that concern our selves; but with great Care and Restraint in those that concern others.

Remember that *Zeal* being an Excrecence of *divine Love*, must in no Sense contradict any Action of *Love*. *Love* to God includes *Love* to our Neighbour, and therefore no Pretence of *Zeal* for God's Glory must make us uncharitable to our Brother; for that is just so pleasing to God, as *Hatred* is an Act of *Love*.

That *Zeal* which concerns others, can spend itself in nothing but Arts and Actions, and charitable Instruments for their good. When it concerns the good of many that one shou'd suffer, it must be done by Persons of a competent Authority and in great Necessity; in rare Instances, according to the Law of God or Man, but never for private Right, or for trifling Accidents, or in mistaken Propositions. The *Zealots* in the old Law had Authority to transfix and stab some certain Persons, but God gave them
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Warrant: It was in the Case of *Idolatry*, or such notorious Crimes, the Danger of which was insupportable, and the Cognizance of which was infallible; and yet that Warrant expir'd with the *Synagogue*.

Zeal in the instances of our Duty and personal Deportment, is more safe than in Matters of Counsel and Actions, besides our just Duty, and tending towards *Perfection*. Tho' in these Instances there is not a direct *Sin*, even where the *Zeal* is less wary, yet there is much Trouble, and some Danger; as if it be spent in the too forward *Vows* of *Chastity*, and Restraints of natural and innocent Liberties.

Zeal may be let loose in the Instances of *internal*, personal, and spiritual Actions, which are Matters of direct *Duty*: As in *Prayers*, and Acts of *Adoration*, *Thanksgiving*, and frequent *Addresses*; provided that no direct Act pass upon them to defile them: Such as Complacency and Opinions of *Sanctity*, censuring others Scruples and Opinions of Necessity, unnecessary Fears, Superstitions, Numbrings of Times and Hours. But let your *Zeal* be as forward as it will, as devout as it will, as seraphical as it will, in your direct Address and Intercourse with *God*, there is no Danger, no Transgression. Do all the parts of your Duty as earnestly as if the *Salvation* of all the World, and the whole

whole *Glory* of *God*, and the *Confusion* of all Devils, and all that you hope or desire, did depend upon every one Action.

Let *Zeal* be seated in the Will or Choice, and regulated with Prudence and a sober Understanding, not in the Fancy and Affections, for these will make it full of Noise and empty of Profit, but that will make it deep and smooth, material and devout.

Zeal is not a direct Duty, no where commanded for itself, and is nothing but a Forwardness and Circumstance of another Duty. It is therefore then only acceptable, when it advances the *Love* of *God* and our Neighbours, whose Circumstances require it. That *Zeal* is only safe, only acceptable, which encreases *Charity* directly; and because *Love* to our Neighbour, and Obedience to *God*, are the two great Portions of *Charity*, we must never account our *Zeal* to be good, but as it advances both these, if it be in a Matter which relates to both, or severally, if it relates severally.

Having consider'd the *internal Acts* of *Religion*, we come now to the *external*; and by it we are taught to present to *God* our *Bodies*, as well as our *Souls*, for *God* is the Lord of both; and if the *Body* serves the *Soul* in Actions natural, civil, and intellectual, it must not be eas'd only in the Offices of *Religion*, unless the *Body* shall expect
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no Portion of the Rewards of *Religion*, such as are *Resurrection*, *Re-union*, and *Glorification*.

The Actions of the *Body*, as they serve to *Religion*, and as they are distinguished from *Sobriety* and *Justice*, relate either to the *Word of God*, or to *Prayer*, or to *Repentance*; and accordingly *reading and bearing the Word of God, fasting and corporal Austerities, feasting or keeping Days of publick Joy and Thanksgiving, have ever been accounted religious Acts.*

Reading and bearing the Word of God are but the several Circumstances of the same Duty, instrumental especially to Faith, but consequently to all other *Graces* of the *Spirit*. It is all one to us whether by the *Eye*, or by the *Ear*, the *Spirit* conveys his Precepts to us. If we hear *St. Paul* saying to us, *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge*, or read it in one of his *Epistles*, in either of them we are equally and sufficiently instructed. The *Scriptures* read are the same thing to us, which the same *Doctrine* was, when it was preach'd by the *Disciples* of our *blessed Lord*, and we are to learn of either with the same Dispositions. The *Word of God* is all those *Commandments* and *Revelations*, those *Promises* and *Threatnings*, recorded in the *Bible*: Nothing else is the

Word of God, that we know of, by any certain Instrument. The good Books and spiritual Discourses, the *Sermons* or *Homilies*, written or spoken by Men, are but the Words of Men, or rather Explications of, and Exhortations according to, the *Word of God*; but of themselves they are not the *Word of God*. In a *Sermon*, the *Text* only, in a proper Sense, is to be called *God's Word*, and yet good *Sermons* are of great Use and Convenience for the Advantages of *Religion*. But the *Holy Ghost* is certainly the best *Preacher* in the *World*, and the Words of *Scripture* the best *Sermons*: All the *Doctrine* of *Salvation* is plainly set down there, that the most unlearned Person, by hearing it read, may understand all his Duty. What can be plainer spoken than this?

*Thou shalt not kill,
Be not drunk with Wine,
Husbands love your Wives,
Whatsoever ye would that Men should do
to you, do ye so to them.*

The Wit of Man cannot more plainly tell us our Duty, or more fully, than the Holy Ghost has done already. What *Abraham* in the *Parable* said concerning the Brethren of the *rich Man*, is here very proper: *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them bear them; but if they refuse to bear these,*
neither

neither will they believe though one should arise from the Dead, to preach to them.

Reading the holy Scriptures is a Duty expressly commanded us, and is call'd in Scripture Preaching; all other Preaching is the Effect of human Skill and Industry, and, tho' of great Benefit, yet it is but an Ecclesiastical Ordinance.

Set apart therefore some Portion of your Time, according to the Opportunities of your Calling and necessary Employment, for the *reading* of holy Scripture, and, if it be possible, every Day read, or hear some of it read. You are sure that *Book* teaches all *Truth*, commands all *Holiness*, and promises all *Happiness*.

When it is in your Power to chuse, accustom your self to such Portions which are most plain, and contain the Story of the Life and Death of our *blessed Saviour*: Read the *Gospels*, the *Psalms* of *David*, and fail not diligently to attend to the *reading* of holy Scriptures, when they are most publickly and solemnly read in Churches. For at such Times, besides the learning our *Duty*, we obtain a Blessing along with it, it becoming to us a part of the solemn divine *Worship*. When the *Word of God* is *read* or *preached* to you, be sure you be of a ready Heart and Mind, free from worldly Cares and Thoughts, diligent to hear, careful to mark, studious to

remember, and desirous to practise all that is commanded. Do not hear for any other End but to become better in your Life, to be instructed in every good Work, and to encrease in the Love and Service of God.

Beg of God by Prayer that he wou'd give you the Spirit of *Obedience* and Profiting, and that he wou'd by his Spirit write the Word in your Heart; to which Purpose serve your self of some affectionate Ejaculations before and after this Duty.

Let not a Prejudice to any Man's Person hinder you from receiving Good by the Doctrine he preaches, if it be according to *Godliness*; but, if Occasion offer it, or especially if Duty present it unto you; that is, if it be preach'd in that Assembly where you are bound to be present, accept the Word preach'd as a Message from God, and the Minister as his *Angel* in that Ministration.

Consider and remark the Doctrine that is presented to you, in any Discourse; and if the Preacher adds accidental Advantages, any thing to comply with your Weakness, or to put your Spirit into Action, or holy Resolution, remember it, and make use of it. But if the *Preacher* be a Weak Person, yet the Text is the *Doctrine* you are to remember, that contains all your *Duty*. It is worth your Attendance to hear that spoken often,

often, and renewed upon your Thoughts. Tho' you shou'd your self be learned, yet the same thing which you knew already, if spoken by another, may be made active by that Application. I can better be comforted by my own Consideration, if another Hand applies Matter to me, than if I do it my self, because the Word of God does not work as a natural Agent, but as a divine Instrument. It does not prevail by the Force of Deduction, and artificial Discourings only, but chiefly by way of Blessing, in the Ordinance and in the Ministry of an appointed Person. At least obey the publick Order, and reverence the Constitution, giving good Example of Humility, Charity, and Obedience.

When *Scriptures* are read, you are only to enquire with Diligence and Modesty, into the Meaning of the *Spirit*: But if *Homilies* or *Sermons* be made upon the Words of *Scripture*, you are to consider, whether all that is spoken be conformable to the *Scriptures*. For tho' you may practise for humane Reasons, and humane Arguments, minister'd by the *Preacher's* Art, yet you must practise nothing but the Command of God, nothing but the *Doctrine* of *Scripture*.

Take the Advice of some pious and prudent spiritual Guide, for the Choice of such

good Books, as may be of use and benefit for your Edification, and leading a holy Life. Esteem that time well accounted for, which is prudently and affectionately employ'd, in hearing or reading good Books, and pious Discourses; ever remembring that God, by hearing us speak to him in *Prayer*, obliges us to hear him speak to us in his *Word*, by what Instrument soever it be convey'd.

True natural *Religion*, that which was common to all Nations, did principally rely upon four great Propositions, *That there is one God. That God is nothing of those things which we see. That God takes care of all things below, and governs all the World. That he is the great Creator of all things without himself.* And according to these were fram'd the four first Precepts of the *Decalogue*. In the *first* Commandment, the *Unity* of the *Godhead* is expressly affirm'd; in the *second*, his *Invisibilty* and *Immateriality*; in the *third*, his *Government* and *Providence*, by avenging them that swear falsely by his Name; in the *fourth* he proclaims himself *Maker of Heaven and Earth*. For in memory of God's Rest from the Work of *six Days*, the *seventh* was hallow'd into a *Sabbath*, and the keeping it was a confessing God to be the great *Maker of Heaven and Earth*; and consequently to this, it was also a Confession of his

his Goodness, his Omnipotence, and his Wisdom, all which were written with a Sun-beam in the great Book of the *Creature*.

As long as the *Law* of the *Sabbath* was bound upon *God's* People, so long *God* would have that to be the solemn manner of confessing these *Attributes*; but when the *Priesthood* being chang'd, there was also a *Change* of the *Law*, the great Duty remain'd unalterable in changed Circumstances. We are eternally bound to confess *God Almighty* to be the *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, but the manner of confessing it, is chang'd from a *Rest* or a doing *nothing*, to a speaking *something*, from a *Day* to a *Symbol*, from a *Ceremony* to a *Substance*, from a *Jewish State* to a *Christian Duty*. We keep one *Day* in *seven*, and so confess the Manner and Circumstances of the *Creation*, and we *rest* also that we may attend on holy Duties; so imitating *God's Rest*, better than the *Jew*, who lay upon his Face from Evening to Evening, and cou'd not by Stripes or Wounds be rais'd up to *steer* the Ship in a great Storm. *God's Rest* was not a natural *Cessation*: He who cou'd not *labour*, cou'd not be said to *rest*; but *God's Rest* is to be understood, to be a beholding and rejoicing in his Work finish'd; and therefore we tru-

ly represent *God's Rest*, when we confess and rejoyce in *God's Works*, and *God's Glory*.

This the *Christian Church* does upon every Day, but especially upon the *Lord's Day*, which she has set apart for this, and all other Offices of *Religion*, being determin'd to this Day by the *Resurrection* of her dearest Lord, it being the first *Day* of Joy the *Church* ever had. And now upon the *Lord's Day* we are not ty'd to the *Rest* of the *Sabbath*, but to all the Works of the *Sabbath*. We are to abstain from bodily *Labour*, not because it is a direct Duty to us as it was to the *Jews*, but because it is necessary, in order to our Duty, that we attend to the *Offices* of *Religion*.

The *Observation* of the *Lord's Day*, differs nothing from the *Observation* of the *Sabbath*, in the Matter of *Religion*, but in the Manner. They differ in the Ceremony and external *Rite*. *Rest* with them was the *Principal*, with us it is the *Accessary*. They differ in the Office or Forms of *Worship*, for they were then to worship God as a *Creator*, *Lord*, and *Father*, we are to add to that our *Redeemer*, and all his other Excellencies and Mercies. And tho' we have more natural and proper Reasons to keep the *Lord's Day* than the *Sabbath*, yet the *Jews* had a *Divine Commandment* for their *Day*, which we have not for *ours*. But we have
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many *Commandments* to do all that Honour to God which was intended in the *fourth Commandment*; and the Apostles appointed the *first Day* of the *Week* for doing it in solemn *Assemblies*.

When you go about to distinguish *Festival Days* from *Common*, do it not by lessening the *Devotions* of ordinary *Days*, that the common *Devotion* may seem bigger upon *Festivals*, but on every *Day* keep your ordinary *Devotions* entire, and enlarge upon the *holy Day*.

Upon the *Lord's Day* we must abstain from all servile and laborious Works, except such as are Matters of Necessity, of common Life, or of great Charity. For these are permitted by that Authority which has separated the *Day* for holy Uses. The *Sabbath* of the *Jews*, tho' consisting principally in *Rest*, and establish'd by God, did yield to these: The *Labour* of *Love* and *Work* of *Religion*, were not against the *Reason* and *Spirit* of the *Commandment*, for which the *Letter* was decreed, and to which it ought to minister. And therefore much more is it so on the *Lord's Day*, where the *Letter* is wholly turn'd into *Spirit*; and there is no *Commandment* of God, but of spiritual and holy Actions. The *Priests* might kill their *Beasts*, and dress them for *Sacrifice*; and *Christ*, tho' born under the *Law*, might heal

a *sick Man*; the *sick Man* might carry his Bed to witness his Recovery, and confess the Mercy, and leap and dance to God for Joy. An Ox might be led to Water, and an *Ass* be hall'd out of a Ditch. And a Man may take *Physick*, and he may eat Meat, and therefore there were of necessity some to prepare and administer it. They were not herein tied down by streight-lac'd Rules to minute and trifling Circumstances, but they had even then a reasonable Latitude, only unnecessary *Labour* was inhibited, or such as did not minister to *Charity* or *Religion*. And even this is enlarg'd by the Gospel, whose *Sabbath* or *Rest* is but a *Circumstance* and Accession to the principal or spiritual *Duties*: Upon the *Christian Sabbath*, *Necessity* is to be serv'd first, then *Charity*, and then *Religion*.

The *Lord's Day* being the *Remembrance* of a great Blessing, must be a Day of Joy, Festivity, spiritual Rejoycing, and Thanksgiving; and therefore 'tis a proper Work of the Day, to let your *Devotions* spend themselves, in singing or reading Psalms, in recounting the great Works of God, in remembering his Mercies, in worshipping his Excellencies, in celebrating his *Attributes*, in admiring his Person, in sending Portions of pleasant Meat, to them for whom nothing

thing is provided, in all the Acts and Instruments of advancing God's Glory, and the Reputation of *Religion*, in which it were a great Decency, that a Memorial of the *Resurrection* shou'd be inserted, that the *particular* Religion of the Day be not swallow'd up in the *general*. And of this we may the more easily serve our selves, by rising seasonably in the *Morning* to private *Devotion*, and by retiring, at the Leisures and Spaces of the *Day*, not employ'd in publick Offices.

Fail not to be present at the publick Hours and Places of *Prayer*, entring early and chearfully, attending reverently and devoutly, abiding patiently during the whole Office, piously assisting at the *Prayers*, and gladly also hearing the *Sermon*. At no hand omitting to receive the holy *Communion* when it is offer'd, unless some great Reason excuse it, this being the great Solemnity of *Thanksgiving*, and a proper Work of the Day.

After the *Solemnities* are past, and in the Intervals between the Morning and Evening Devotion, as you shall find Opportunity, visit sick Persons, reconcile Differences, do Offices of Neighbourhood; enquire into the *Needs* of the Poor, especially *House-keepers*, relieve them as they shall need, and you are able; for then we truly rejoyce in God, when we make our Neighbours, the
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poor Members of Chiist, rejoyce together with us.

Whatsoever you are to do your self as necessary, you are to take care that others also, who are under your Charge, do in their Station and Manner. Let your *Servants* be call'd to *Church*, and all your *Family* that can be spar'd from necessary and great Household Ministries. Those that cannot, let them go by turns, and be supply'd otherwise as well as they may. Provided that on these *Days* especially, they be instructed in the Articles of Faith, and necessary parts of their Duty.

Those who *labour* hard in the *Week*, must be *ease'd* upon the Lord's Day, such *Ease* being a great *Charity* and *Alms*; but on no account must they be permitted to use any unlawful Games, any thing forbidden by the Laws, or any thing that is dangerous, and apt to mingle Sin with it; no *Games* prompting to Wantonness, to Drunkenness, to Quarrelling, to ridiculous and superstitious Customs; but let their Refreshments be innocent, charitable, of good Report, and not exclusive of the Duties of Religion.

Within these Bounds, because neither God nor Man has past any Obligation upon us, we must preserve our *Christian Liberty*, and not suffer our selves to be intangled with a Yoke of Bondage: For even a good Action
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may become a Snare to us, if we make it an Occasion of Scruple, by a Pretence of Necessity, binding Loads upon the Conscience, not with the Bonds of God, but of Men, and of Fancy, or Opinion, or of Tyranny. Whatsoever is laid upon us by the Hands of Man, must be acted and accounted for by the Measure of Man: But our best Measure is this; He keeps the Lord's Day best, that keeps it with most Religion and with most Charity.

As to other *Solemnities*, especially *Saints Days*, every *Church* is to be sparing in the Number of them, and to be temperate in her Injunctions, not imposing them, but upon voluntary and unbusied Persons, without Snare or Burthen.

That Man must certainly be a great Stranger to the Exercise of true Piety and Virtue, who is not so affected with it, as to take a great deal of Pleasure and Delight in it, there *being* nothing that can afford so much Joy and Satisfaction to the Soul as that does. I cannot give a greater Instance of it in anything, than in the common Duty I have already discours'd of, the *reading the Word of God*.

This is one of the *Ways of Wisdom*, which wise and good Men often walk in; and cou'd you but see how their Hearts are affected while they read them, you wou'd need no
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other Argument to persuade you, 'tis a pleasant and delightful Work. For the *Scriptures* are the Word, the *Oracles* of God himself, and therefore they who are truly Godly, cannot but find extraordinary Joy and Comfort in reading and consulting of them. For the Will of the Almighty is there reveal'd to them, and his glorious Properties and Perfections unveil'd before them. They meet there with all the *Promises* which he has made to Mankind in *Jesus Christ*, and with all things whatsoever, which they should desire to know. They may there learn, both how to serve God here, and to enjoy him hereafter, which are the only things a good Man desires to know. And they who are truly such, cannot but be strangely affected in the reading of the Scriptures; the heavenly and divine Expressions which they there meet with, are transporting to them, as may be seen from the Example of *David*, *How sweet, how pleasant was the Word of God to him?* And every godly Man being of the same Temper and Disposition of *David*, he cannot but find as much Comfort and Joy in his divine Word, as the Royal *Psalmist* did, who therefore describes a good Man, *by his delighting, as he did, in the Law of God.*

Praying and praising God are ways of *Piety* and *Pleasure* too: For by *Prayer*, they who
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are truly *pious*, converse with God himself, with an humble Confidence, that whatsoever they ask in *Christ's* Name, they shall receive, which must needs afford them more Joy and Comfort than any one is able to conceive, but they that have it; especially praising of him being always joyn'd with praying to him, which is so high, so holy, so heavenly a Work, so agreeable to the Nature of the *Saints*, that it cannot but raise their Spirits to the highest pitch of Joy and Pleasure. This is the constant Business and Recreation of the glorify'd Saints in Heaven; and who is able to express the Pleasure which the truly Pious take, in frequenting the publick Ordinances, to present themselves together in a solemn and reverent manner before the eternal God, to implore his Mercy, to magnifie his Name, to hear his Word, and to perform their Homage and Devotion? How did *David* rejoyce to go to the House of God? How did he grieve, when by reason of his Banishment he was depriv'd of this Mercy? How did he envy the very Birds that cou'd go nearer to God's *Altar* than himself? How does he beg to be restor'd to his former Liberty, that he might freely go to the House of God again? preferring it before all other Joys. And doubtless, all those that are as holy as *David* was, cannot but find the same Delight, in worshipping

shipping and adoring God, as he did. They cannot but find these ways of Wisdom to be the ways of *Pleasantness* and *Peace*.

Meditating upon God and Christ, upon Heaven, and the Glories of the World to come, is a Duty no less pleasant than profitable to the *Saints* of God. By this Means they have their Conversation always in Heaven, there solacing their Souls in the *Contemplation* of divine Perfections. As the lustful Man is delighted with beholding of earthly Beauty, and the Covetous with his worldly Riches, so and much more he that is Heavenly and Godly, must needs be delighted with meditating upon God and Heaven, Objects agreeable to his Temper and Constitution. We may therefore boldly say, There is no Pleasure like to his who always dwells in Heaven, conversing with those transcendent Beauties, Glories and Perfections that are there. This is what the Royal Psalmist found *so sweet and pleasant to his Soul*. What can be more refreshing to a *divine* Spirit than the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*? We feed there upon Angels Food, the Bread of Life, that came down from Heaven. We are Guests at *Christ's* own *Table*, and have nothing less than all the Merits of his Death and Passion display'd and set before us, which the truly Holy cannot but look upon as the best Banquet,

Banquet, the most pleasant Feast, which they ever were or can be invited to in this World. If the *Duties* which Wisdom requires to be perform'd, afford so much Comfort and Delight to them that daily perform them, what then shall we think of the Pleasures, which a good Man takes in the Exercise of all true *Grace and Virtue*? What shall we think of it? Why certainly that it is far greater than we are able to think it; for no Man can conceive it but he that has it. That we may understand something of it, let us consider the true Nature of *Piety*; that it consists in the right Temper and Disposition of Mind, reducing all its Powers and Faculties into their proper Frame and Constitution. Thus it may justly be term'd, the Health and Soundness of the Soul, as all Vices are Diseases and Distempers in it. And therefore, as an healthful and sound Body is not only free from Pains and Aches, but all its natural Motions are pleasing and delightful to it; so is it with the pious Soul, all pious and virtuous Actions being agreeable to its Nature, the exerting them cannot but be very grateful and pleasant to it. As when such a Soul exercises its self in the loving of God, and longing after him, in trusting on him, and rejoicing in him, and the like, such Acts as these are the natural Product of that *Grace and Virtue* which is sown
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in the Heart. That Man wou'd do violence to his renew'd Nature that shou'd not exert them, and therefore he cannot but take extraordinary Delight in the exerting or acting of them. The same may be said of all other Virtues and Graces whatsoever, as *Faith, Humility, Self-denial, Temperance, Patience, Truth, Faithfulness, Justice, Meekness, Charity*, and whatever else it is that the Hearts and Lives of true Saints are adorn'd with. For such Acts as these, flowing naturally from a pious Soul, renew'd and assisted always by the Grace of God, they cannot but always carry a secret kind of Pleasure and Delight along with them, which none can perceive, much less partake of, but the Soul from whence they flow.

Besides this Agreeableness which there is between all Acts of Piety and pious Souls, he that sincerely performs those Duties, and exercises those Graces which God requires, enjoys by it Peace of Conscience, an unspeakable Joy and Satisfaction in his Mind arising from the Sense and Consideration, that he has done his Duty, and that God is pleas'd with him. For the Apprehension of *God's Love and Favour* is certainly the greatest Pleasure and Happiness that Men or Angels are capable of. But according to our Obedience to *God's Laws*, so generally is our Sense of his Love to us. If we have sincerely endeavoured to
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observe whatsoever he has commanded, we have just ground to hope for Christ's sake he will accept of us, and is well pleas'd with us; which must needs affect us with extraordinary Joy and Comfort, as *St. Paul* assures us, it did him.

This is what every Christian may often experience. When we have been conscious to our selves of some wilful or notorious Sin, have not our Consciences often flown in our Faces, and rais'd Storms and Tempests in our Breasts, ready to sink us every Moment into Horrour and Despair? On the other side, when we have faithfully discharged our *Duties*, and kept our *Consciences void of Offence, towards God and towards Man*, have we not found our Minds serene, and our whole Souls transported into Pleasure and Satisfaction, at the Apprehension and Remembrance of it? It is thus with them that walk only by the Light of Nature, and how much more then with such as are guided by the Light of the Gospel, and assisted with the Principles of true *Grace*? Their blessed Souls must needs be affected with extraordinary Comfort and Joy, at the Sense of their serving and pleasing God, in the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ, which he stedfastly believes in, and relies continually upon, as having the Word of God himself for it, that what he

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sincerely endeavours to do, is acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. And whoever believes this, as every pious Man certainly does, cannot but take inexpressible Delight in serving God, because he believes that for Christ's sake God is pleased with what he does, and accepts of it as well as if it was every way as perfect and exact as the Law itself requires it should be: Which is so great, so high a Comfort, that they who experience it in themselves, can never be able to express it to others.

You see therefore what *Peace* and *Pleasure* there is in the ways of Wisdom, in the several Acts of Piety, which they who are truly godly, continually exercise themselves in. The Pleasures such enjoy far exceed all the sensual *Delights* of the World. They who devote themselves wholly to the Service of God, live the most pleasant and comfortable Lives of any Men in the World: They are indeed the only Men that know what Pleasure and Comfort means, and by Consequence that the *ways of Wisdom* are not only the *ways of Pleasantness*, but the only *ways of Pleasantness* that it is possible for any Man to walk in.

All other Pleasures only tickle the Senses and delight the Fancies of Men, and so have no other Being nor Existence in the World but what our deluded Imaginations give them.

them. Abstract your Fancy from all things here below, and what will then become of your Pleasure in them? How soon will it vanish into Smoak and Vapours, into Vanity and Vexation of Spirit? Think Gold Dirt, and it is so: Think the Pomp and Glory of the World to be mere Dream and Shadow, and it is so: Think *Lust*, *Luxury*, *Drunkenness* and *Gluttony* to be beastly and brutish Fooleries, and they are so. For these are things which *Fools* and *Madmen*, nay the Brute Beasts themselves take as much seeming Pleasure in, as the soberest and learnedst Men can do. We shou'd therefore never fancy any thing of Pleasure in such things as these are, were not our Imaginations so fearfully corrupted and depraved, as to present every thing in a wrong Shape, and under false Colours to us. For we are all Men, rational Creatures, made after the Image of God, endow'd with spiritual and immortal Souls, as well as with frail and corruptible Bodies; and therefore it cannot in Reason be imagin'd but that far other and higher Delights are design'd for us, than such as Brute Beasts themselves partake of as well as we.

The Pleasures which pious Men enjoy are quite of another Nature: They are not seated in the Body or Senses, but the Soul itself is the Subject of them, and all its Powers and Faculties are affected and delighted with

with them. Wherefore our Saviour, to distinguish them from all other Pleasures, calls them *the Rest or Happiness of our Souls*. The things of this World may something ease and refresh our Bodies, but they cannot reach the Soul at all, so as to afford it any thing of Comfort and Satisfaction. It was, on this Account, a foolish thing for the *rich Man* in the Gospel to say to his Soul, *Take thine Ease*, because his worldly Goods were encreas'd, as you see he did. But no less a Person than the great God himself call'd him *Fool* for his Pains. He was a Fool indeed, that thought his Earthly Riches cou'd give Ease to his Soul. No, none but Christ can ever do that, neither does he ever do it to any but the truly *Pious*: They may say indeed to their *Souls*, *Souls take your Ease*, for you have Goods real, spiritual, and eternal: Goods laid up for you, not only for many Years, but forever and ever. This is more than any one else can say, and therefore they must be acknowledg'd to be the only Persons that enjoy true Peace and Pleasure in the World; such Peace and Pleasure as becomes a Man and a Christian to solace and delight himself continually in, the Soul itself being the proper and immediate Judge of it.

As the Pleasures which arise from *Piety* exceed all others in the *Subject*, so do they
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in the *Object* too. Whatever sensitive Pleasures Men enjoy, they are no more, nor greater, than what the silly Creatures upon Earth can afford them. They look no higher than this lower World, and if they can make a shift to pick up something which looks like Pleasure in it, they are beholden to very inanimate and senseless Creatures for it. Thus the covetous Man takes Pleasure in refin'd *Dirt*, the Epicure in *Meats* and *Drinks*, the vainglorious Man in empty Titles of *Honour*; and every one but he who is sincerely pious, can find no other Pleasure in the World, but what he is forc'd to fetch from sensible and terrestrial *Objects*, as being the only things he converses with, tho' they were never intended to make Men happy.

But it is not so with the *Sons of Wisdom*, with those who are born again, and so become *Children* of the most High. They feed not like Swine upon the Husks of this lower World, but have their Heads and Hearts continually taken up with the Contemplation and Enjoyments of the chiefest Good, the eternal God himself; or at least with longing and thirsting after him, and with rejoicing at every Intimation that they have of his Love and Kindness to them: He who is the only Center of all Perfections, is the only Object of their Joy and Pleasure; the *Light of his Countenance*, that is the Manifestation

nifestation of his Grace and Mercy to them, is the only good that they desire or rejoice in. Hence such as are truly wise and godly, disdaining to converse with nothing else but Dirt and Clay, as silly Mortals upon Earth do, *their Conversation is in Heaven*; there are all the Wealth and Joys that are the Objects of their Desires, and therefore their Thoughts and Affections are always there; and as there is nothing upon Earth, so neither is there any thing in Heaven which they desire in Comparison of God. All the World, the whole Creation, is nothing to a godly Man. The eternal God, the Creator himself, is the Portion of their Cup, and the Lot of their Inheritance: He is their Hope and Help, their Joy and Desire, their Light and Love, their Strength and Power, their Wealth and Riches, their Sun, their Shield, and their exceeding great Reward: He is their all, their more than all, their God. And seeing this supreme, and universal Being of the World, is the only Object of a Man's Delight, the *ways of Wisdom* must needs be acknowledg'd to surpass all other ways in Pleasantness and Peace, as much as Heaven does Earth, and the infinite *Creator* all finite *Creatures*.

The *Pleasures* of pious Men are true, solid, pure and unmixt, which cannot be said of the sensual Delights of this World, which
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are always usher'd in, attended, and follow'd with Grief and Trouble. They are no Pleasures till some preceding Pain or Sorrow makes them so: And as they begin, so they must go on and end with Sadness, as *Solomon* himself, who made as much Trial of 'em as ever Man did, found by his own Experience, and has therefore expressly asserted: But it is not so with the Godly, their Joys are real and substantial, without any Allay of Trouble. They depend not upon the Constitution of their Bodies, but the right Disposition of their Minds, which being always preserv'd in a due Temper, their Pleasures are not subject to such Changes and Vicissitudes as others are, but their Hearts are always fix'd, trusting upon God.

They are firm and constant *Pleasures*, not like the uncertain *Delights* of sinful Men, which ebb and flow with the Stream of worldly Prosperity, and depend altogether upon the unconstant Smiles of Fortune in this World: They are merry and jolly while they prosper, but let them be depriv'd of any part of their Estates, crost in their Relations or Designs, or laid upon a Bed of Sickness, and then all their *Pleasure* is gone, nothing they have can afford them any Comfort or Relief, but their Thoughts trouble them, and every thing seems sad and sorrowful to them. The *Pleasures* of *Piety* are

not such as these: They are not taken from any sublunary Objects, and therefore do not increase or wain with them. But the good Man is as cheerful when the World frowns as when it smiles upon him: However the World goes with him 'tis all one to him: He is still the same; tho' he loses all things here below, he loses nothing of his Joy; for that was plac'd only upon God before, and so it is still, in the midst of all his Thoughts within, the Comforts of God still rejoice and delight his Soul. Tho' he be upon his Sick, his Death-Bed, his Comfort still remains; his Sickness cannot be so painful and tormenting to his Body, but the Testimony of a good Conscience is still as pleasing and supporting to his Soul.

The *Pleasures* of the Righteous are full and satisfying; the things of this World are all so vain and empty, that whatever Men fancy, they can never be satisfy'd with them; and the Reason is, because the Soul is capable of more than all this World; wherefore its Desires being as large as its Capacities, can never be satisfy'd with any thing or all things in it. But the godly Man drinks continually at the Fountain-Head, the inexhaustible Fountain of all true Joy and Happiness. God himself is the only Object of his Delight, in whom he cannot but rest fully

fully satisfy'd, being not able to desire more than he has in him.

The *Pleasures* of this World are but brutish and sensual, no better than the very Beasts themselves enjoy as well as Men. But the Joys of the Godly are Angelical and Divine, such Joys as the Cherubims and Seraphims, the Angels and Archangels, enjoy in Heaven, such even as God himself enjoys. For what does he rejoice in, but in himself, and what do they rejoice in but only him? Therefore if you wou'd know what Joys there are in Heaven, you must look into the Breast of a pious Man, you may there see them represented as clearly as they can be in this World, but you cannot read them nor understand them, unless your selves be the pious Men ye look into.

The *Pleasures* of this Life are at the best but the *Pleasures* of this Life; when this Life is ended, you must leave them all, so as never to return to them again; but instead of present Pleasures and Delights you will have Grief and Sorrow, Pain and Torment, Misery and Desolation for ever. It is not so with the Joys of the *Pious*: They are begun in this Life, and perfected in the Life to come, so as to continue in their Lustre and Beauty, in their Height and Perfection to all Eternity. Neither will they only last for ever, but the Pious shall know, and

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be assur'd of it too, which will be a great Addition to them. For the very Thoughts of losing these Pleasures, as Men of this World must lose theirs, would damp all the Comfort they take in them. But there will be no fear of that, they are not such Pleasures as Time can consume, or Eternity itself diminish; he who enjoys them once, will be certain to enjoy them for ever.

How great then are the Mistakes that are in the World concerning *Piety*, as if it was a melancholy and disconsolate Course of Life? Whereas it is plain that no Persons in the World enjoy such *Pleasures* as the *Godly* do; indeed none but they enjoy any true Pleasure at all. The rest of Mankind are altogether unacquainted with true Joy and Comfort, true Peace and Pleasure, because they walk not in the ways of Wisdom. How great is the Folly and Madness of sinful Men, who embrace the Shadow for the Substance, and take up with seeming instead of real Joys? They are always thirsting after Pleasure, but can never be satisfy'd with it, till they be sanctify'd and made truly holy.

Wherefore as ever we desire to lead chearful and comfortable, pleasant and happy Lives, either in this World or that which is to come, we must resign our selves to God, and make it our Business to please him, walking continually in the ways of Wis-

Wisdom, and then we shall have *Pleasure* indeed. Such *Pleasure* as the World can neither give nor take from us; such *Pleasure* as will refresh our Minds, comfort our Hearts, support our Spirits, rejoice our Souls in all Conditions, and make us happy both now and for ever.

These several Ideas of Religion and Virtue, will not be so useful as one might wish, unless we descend also into Particulars, and treat of the humane as well as Christian Virtues; all which are included in a *Christian Life*, and the Practice of them effectually conduces to our future Happiness.

All the Virtues which belong to a Man, consider'd merely as a rational Creature, consist in these five Particulars, *Prudence, Moderation, Fortitude, Temperance, Humility*. All which are also essential Parts of the *Christian Life*.

Prudence is the Root and Ground-work of all our Virtues. 'Tis that which gives Law and Scope to all our Motions; that proposes the Ends, and prescribes the Measures of our Actions. For Prudence consists in being guided and directed by right Reason, as it proposes to us the worthiest Ends, and directs us to the fittest and most effectual Means of obtaining them. To live *prudently* is to live in the constant Exercise of our Reason, and to be continually pursuing such *Ends*, as *right Reason* proposes, by such Means as *right Reason*

son directs us to, which is the proper Business of all the Virtues of *Religion*; which is therefore so frequently call'd in Scripture, *Wisdom* or *Prudence*.

Our Reason being the noblest Principle of our Nature, that by which we are rais'd above the level of Brutes, by which we are ally'd to Angels, and border upon God himself; it ought upon this account to be submitted to, as the supreme Regent of all our other Powers, to be look'd upon as the *Rule* of our *Will*, and the Guide of all our animal Motions. And when, to gratifie our sensual Appetites, or unreasonable Passions, we either neglect those Ends which our Reason proposes to us, to pursue them by such Means as our Reason disallows of, we reverse the very Order of our Natures; and while we do so, 'tis impossible we shou'd be happy, either here or hereafter: For every thing you see is diseased, while 'tis in an unnatural State and Condition, while its *Parts* are displac'd, or put into Disorder, or distorted into an unnatural Figure. So it is with a Man, who while he preserves his Faculties in a natural Station, and Subordination to each other, while he keeps his *Affections* and *Appetites* in subjection to his *Will*, and his *Will* to his Reason, he is calm and quieter, and enjoys within himself perpetual Ease and Tranquility. But when once he breaks
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this Order, and suffers his Passions or Appetites to usurp the Place of his Reason, to impose contrary Ends to it, or prescribe contrary Means; his Faculties, like disjointed Members, are in continual Anguish and Anxiety. And hence it is, that in the Course of a wicked Life, we feel such restless Contentions between our *Spirit* and *Flesh*, the *Law* in our *Minds*, and the *Law* in our *Members*, because our Nature is out of tune, its Faculties are *displac'd* and *disorder'd*, and that Sovereign Principle of *Reason* which shou'd *sway* and *govern* us, is depos'd and made a *Vassal* to our *Appetites* and *Passions*. For in all our evil Courses we *chuse* and *refuse*, *resolve* and *act*, not as *Reason* directs us, but as *Sense* and *Passion* bias us; and our *Reason*, having nothing to do in all this brutish Scene of Action, either sleeps it out without minding or regarding, or else sits by as an idle Spectator of it, and only censures and condemns it: 'Tis this which causes all that Tumult and Confusion that is in our Natures; and till by the Exercise of *Prudence* our *Faculties* are reduc'd and set in order again, our Mind will be like our *Body*, while its *Bones* are out of joint, continually restless and unquiet; and therefore to remove this great Indisposition of our Nature to *Happiness*, Prudence is requir'd of us, as

one of the principal Virtues of the heavenly Part of the *Christian Life*.

See, says the Apostle, *that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools but as Wise*. In the whole Course of your Actions, take heed that ye follow the Guidance of your Reason, and do not suffer your selves to be seduc'd by your blind *Passions* and *Appetites*, which are the *Guides* of Fools. And accordingly St. Paul prays for his *Christian Colossians*, *That they might be fill'd with the Knowledge of God in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding*: That they might have such a Knowledge of God's Will, as might render them truly *prudent*, and cause them to pursue the best *Ends* by the best *Means*.

That the Practice of this Virtue of *Prudence* is a most proper and effectual Means of our eternal Happiness, is evident from hence, because the Practice of it is a constant *Exercise* of *Reason*. For to act *prudently* in Religion, is to follow the best *Reason*, to aim at Heaven, which is the best End, and direct our Actions thither by the best *Rules*: 'Tis to consult what is best for our selves, and how it may be most effectually obtain'd. In a Word, it is to intend the chiefest Good above all, and to level our Lives and Actions most directly towards it.

By living in the continual Practice of *religious Prudence*, we shall by degrees habituate

tuate our selves to a Life of Reason, and
 shake off that drowsie Charm of Sense and
 Passion, which hangs upon our Minds, and
 renders our *Faculties* so dull and unactive.
 Having disus'd our selves awhile to obey
 their blind and imperious Dictates, our Reason
 will re-assume its Throne in us, and direct
 all our Aims and Endeavours, to what
 is fittest and most reasonable. For we being
 finite and limited Beings, cannot operate
 several ways with equal Vigour at once.
 Our rational and sensitive Propensions, are
 made in such a regular and *equilibrions* Order,
 that proportionably as the one *encreases*
in Activity, the other always *decays*; and
 so accordingly as we abate in the Strength
 of our brutish, we shall improve in the Vigour
 of our rational Faculties. But to act
 suitably to their Natures, being the End of
 all our Faculties and Powers of Action, the
 God of Nature, to excite them to it, has
 founded all their Pleasure in the vigorous
 Exercise of them upon suitable Objects:
 Since therefore our *Reason* is the best and
 noblest of all Powers of Action, the greatest
 Pleasure we are capable of, must certainly
 spring out of the Exercise of it. Wherefore
 since *Prudence* consists in the use of our
Reason, the Practice of it must needs effectually
 contribute to our Pleasure and Happiness:
 For Use and Exercise will mightily

strengthen and improve our Reason, and render it not only more apprehensive of what is fit and reasonable, but also more persuasive and prevalent, and when once it is improv'd into a prevailing Principle of Action, and has acquir'd not only Skill enough to prescribe what is right to us, but also Power enough to persuade us to comply with its Prescriptions, to chuse and refuse, to love and hate, to hope and fear, desire and delight, and regulate all our Actions by its Laws and Dictates, then are we entering upon our Heaven and Happiness.

That which makes us unhappy is, that our sinful and unreasonable Affections do so hamper and intangle us, that we cannot freely exercise our Faculties upon such Objects as are most suitable to them; that our Minds and Wills are so fetter'd by our vicious Inclinations, that we cannot exert them upon that which is most worthy to be known and chosen, without a great deal of Difficulty and Distraction. But now, under the Conduct of our *Reason*, our Faculties will by Degrees recover their Freedom, and disengage themselves from those vicious Encumbrances, which do so clog and interrupt them in their rational Motions. When this is thoroughly effected, we are in full Possession of the heavenly State. Our *Passions* and *Appetites* being perfectly subdu'd

subdu'd to our *Reason*, all our *rational Faculties* will be free, and every one will move towards its proper Objects, without any Let or Hindrance; our *Understanding* will be swallow'd up in a fix'd Contemplation of the sublimest Truths, our *Wills* entirely resign'd to the Choice and Embraces of the truest *Good*, our *Affections* unalterably devoted to the Love and Fruition of the most excellent Beauty and Perfection; and in this consists the happy State of Heaven.

Another *Virtue* which appertains to Man, consider'd merely as a *rational Animal*, is *Moderation*, which consists in proportioning our concupiscible Affections to the just Worth and Value of things, so as neither to spend our Affections too prodigally upon Trifles, nor yet to be over sparing or niggardly of them to real and substantial Goods; but to love, desire and expect things more or less, according to the Estimate which our best and most impartial *Reason* makes of their Worth and Goodness. For he who affects things more than in the Esteem of *Reason* they deserve, affects them irrationally, and regulates his Passion by his wild extravagant Fancy, and not by his Reason and Judgment. While Men do thus neglect their *Reason*, and accustom themselves to *desire* and *love*, and affect without it, they necessarily

farly disable themselves to enjoy a *rational Happiness*. For besides, that their *rational Faculties*, being thus laid by and unemploy'd, will naturally contract *Rust*, and grow every Day more weak and restive: Besides, that their unexercis'd *Reason* will melt away in Sloth and Idleness, and all its vital Powers freeze for want of Motion, and like standing Water, stagnate and gather more Corruption, and putrifying by Degrees, till at last 'twill be impossible to revive them to the vigorous Exercise of Motion, in which their Pleasure and Happiness consists: Besides this, I say, by habituating our selves to affect things irrationally, to love the *least Goods most*, and the *greatest least*, we shall disable our selves from enjoying any Goods but only such as cannot make us happy: For he who loves any Good more than 'tis worth, can never be happy in the Enjoyment of it, because he thinks there is more in it than he finds, and so is always disappointed in the Fruition of it: And the Grief of being disappointed in what he expects, does commonly countervail the Pleasure of what he finds and enjoys while he is in the Pursuit of any Good, which he inordinately debates upon; he is wild and imaginative, he swells with fantastick Joys, and juggles himself into *Expectations*, which are as large and boundless as his Desires. But when
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once he is seiz'd of it, and finds how vastly the Enjoyment falls short of his Expectation, his Pleasure is presently lost in his Disappointment, and so he remains as unsatisfy'd as ever. Thus if he were to spend an Eternity in such Disputes and Enjoyments, his Life wou'd be nothing but an everlasting Succession of Expectations and Disappointments.

Besides which also, it is to be consider'd, that all these *lesser Goods*, which are the Objects of our extravagant Affections, are as fleeting as they are false. The *lesser Goods* are those that are for the worst part of our Body and animal Life; the proper Goods whereof, are the outward sensitive Enjoyments of this World: All which, when we leave this World, we must leave for ever, and go away into Eternity with nothing about us, but only the good or bad Dispositions of our Souls; and that which is the prevailing Temper of our Souls in this Life, will doubtless be so in the other too. For the entering into the other World, tho' it will, doubtless, improve those Souls which were *really* good before, yet it is not to be imagin'd how it shou'd create those good, who were *habitually* bad. And if we retain in the other World, that prevailing Affection to these sensitive Goods which we contracted in this, it must necessarily render us unspeakably

ably miserable there. For every Lust the Soul carries into the other World, will, by being eternally separated from its Pleasures convert into an hopeless Desire, and upon that account grow more furious and impatient. There is none of all the Torments of the Mind comparable to that of an outrageous Desire, joyn'd with Despair of Satisfaction, which is just the Case of sensual and worldly minded Souls in the other Life, where they are full of sharp and unrebat'd Desires; and in this desolate Condition they are forc'd to wander to and fro, tormented with a restless Rage, an hungry and unsatisfy'd Desire, craving Food, but neither finding nor expecting any; and so in unexpressible Anguish they pine away a long Eternity. And tho' they might find Content and Satisfaction, cou'd they but divert their Affections another way, and reconcile them to the heavenly Enjoyments; yet being irrecoverably pre-engaged to *sensual* Goods, they have no Savour or Relish of any thing else, but are like *feverish Tongues* that disgust and nauseate the most grateful Liquors, by reason of their own overflowing Gall. So impossible is it for Men to be happy either here or hereafter, so long as their Affections to the lesser Goods of this World, do so immoderately exceed the Worth and Value of them.

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The peculiar Office of the Virtue of *Moderation*, is to bound our *concupiscible* Affections, and proportion them to the intrinsic Worth of those outward Goods which we affect and desire. For tho' the Word *Moderation*, according to our present Acceptation of it, be no where to be found in the *New Testament*, yet the Virtue express'd by it is frequently enjoin'd; as particularly, where we are forbid to *set our Affections upon the things of this Earth*: And again, *To love the World and the things that are in the World*. Which Phrases are not to be so understood, as if we were not to love the Enjoyments of the World at all, for they are the Blessings of God, and such as he has propos'd to us in his Promises, as the *Rewards* and *Encouragements* of our *Obedience*; and certainly he wou'd never encourage us to obey him, by the Hope of such *Rewards* as are unlawful for us to desire and love. The Meaning therefore of these Prohibitions is, that we shou'd so moderate our Affections to the World, as not to permit them to exceed the real Worth and Value of its Enjoyments. For it is not simply our loving it, but our loving it to such a Degree as is inconsistent with our Love of God, that is forbidden here. And hence *Covetousness*, which is an *immoderate* Desire of the World, is called *Idolatry*, because it sets
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the World in the Place of God, and gives it that supream Degree of Affection which is only due to him; and this the Apostle calls *inordinate Affections*, because it extravagantly exceeds the intrinsic worth and value of its Objects.

That this Virtue of *Moderation* does mightily contribute to our Acquisition of *Heavenly Happiness*, is evident from what has been already said, namely, that till our Affections are thus *moderated*, we can have no favour or relish of the heavenly Enjoyments; for in this corrupt State of our Natures, we generally *understand* by our *Affections*, which, like colour'd Glais, represent all Objects to us in their Hue and Complexion. Thus when a Man's Affections are immediately carry'd out towards worldly things, they will be sure by Degrees to corrupt and deprave his Judgment, and render him as unfit to judge of divine and spiritual Enjoyments, as a Ploughman is to be Moderator in the *Schools*: For tho' in his Nature there is a tendency to *rational* Pleasures, yet this he may, and very frequently does stifle and extinguish by addicting himself wholly to the *Delights* and *Gratifications* of his Sense, which by Degrees will so melt down his *rational* Inclinations into his *sensual*, and confound and mingle them with his carnal Appetites, that his *Soul* will wholly

wholly sympathize with his *Body*, and have all *likes* and *dislikes* in common with it.

Now to such a *Soul*, the spiritual World must needs be a barren *Wilderness*, where no Good grows that it can live upon, none but what is nauseous and distasteful to his coarse and vitiated Palate: Were we admitted to that heavenly Place where the Blessed dwell, yet unless we had acquir'd their heavenly Disposition and Temper, we cou'd never participate with them in their Pleasures; for so great wou'd be the Antipathy of our sensual Affections to them, that we shou'd doubtless fly away from them, and rather chuse to be for ever *insensible*, than to be condemned to an everlasting *Perception* of what is so ungrateful to our Natures. Wherefore till we have in some measure *moderated* our *concupiscible Affections*, and wean'd them from their excessive Dotages upon sensual Good, 'tis impossible we shou'd enjoy the Happiness of Heaven.

Another Virtue which belongs to a Man, consider'd merely as a *rational* Creature, is *Fortitude*, which in the largest Sense consists in not permitting our *irascible Affections* to exceed those Evils or Dangers which we seek to repel or avoid, in keeping our *Fear* and *Anger*, our *Malice*, *Envy* and *Revenge* in such due subjection, as not to let them exceed those Bounds which Reason and the Nature

Nature of things prescribe them. *Fortitude* is not taken here in the narrow Sense of the *Moralists*, as it is a Medium between irrational *Fear* and *Fool-hardiness*, but as it is the *Rule* by which all those *irascible Passions* in us, which arise from the Sense of any Evil or Danger, ought to be guided and directed. That by which we are to guard and defend our selves against all those troublesome and disquieting Impressions which outward Evils and Dangers are apt to make upon our Minds. In this Latitude, *Fortitude* not only comprehends Courage as it is oppos'd to *Fear*, but also *Gentleness* as it is oppos'd to *Fierceness*; *Sufferance* as it is oppos'd to *Impatience*; *Contentedness* as it is oppos'd to *Envy*; and *Meekness* as it is oppos'd to *Malice* and *Revenge*; all which are the *Passions* of weak and pusillanimous Minds that are not able to withstand an Evil, nor endure the least touch of it without being startled and disordered; that are so softned with *Baseness* and *Cowardise*, that they cannot resist the most gentle Impressions of Injury. For as sick Persons are offended with the *light* of the *Sun* and the freshness of the Air, which are highly pleasant and delightful to such as are well and in *Health*; so Persons of weak feeble Minds are easily offended, their Spirits are so tender and effeminate, that they cannot endure the least Air of Evil shou'd blow upon them,

them, and what wou'd be only a Diversion to a couragious Soul, troubles and incommodes them. Whatever *Courage* such Persons may pretend to, 'tis merely a Heat and Ferment of their *Blood* and *Spirits*; a *Courage* wherein *Game-Cocks* and *Mastiffs* outvie the greatest Heroes of them all: But as to that which is truly *rational* and *manly*, which consists in a firm composedness of Mind in the midst of evil or dangerous Accidents, they are the most wretched *Cowards* in Nature. He that has true *Fortitude*, is harden'd against Evil upon *rational Principles*, he is fortified and guarded with *Reason* and *Consideration*, that no dolorous Accident from without is able to invade his Soul, or raise any violent Commotions in it. In a word, he hath such a constant Power over his *irascible Affections*, as not to be over prone either to be *timorous* in *Danger*, or *envious* in *Want*, or *impatient* in *Suffering*, or *angry* in *Contempt*, or *malicious* and *vengeful* under *Injuries* and *Provocations*: And till we have acquir'd this Virtue, we can never be happy here or hereafter.

While we are in this World, we must expect to be encompass'd with continual Crouds of evil Accidents, some or other of which will be always pressing upon and jussling against us: If our Minds therefore are sore and uneasie, and over apt to be affected
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with the Evil, we shall be continually *pain'd* and *disquieted*: For whereas were our Minds but calm and easie, all the evil Accidents that befall us, wou'd be but like a Shower of Hail upon the Tiles of a Musick-Room, which with all its Clatter and Noise disturbs not the Harmony that is within; our being too apt to be moved into *Passion* by them, uncovers our Mind to them, and lays it open to the *Tempest*. If our *Reason* commands not our *Passions*, outward *Accidents* will, and according as they happen to be, good or bad, so must we be sure still to be happy or miserable; and in this Condition like a Ship without a Pilot, in the midst of a tempestuous Sea, we are the Sport of every Wind and Wave, and know not, till the Event has determined it, how the next Billow will dispose of us, whether it will dash us against a *Rock*, or drive us into a quiet *Harbour*.

So miserable in our Condition *here*, while we are utterly destitute of this *Virtue* of *Fortitude*, but much more wretched will the want of it necessarily render us *hereafter*. For all those *Affections* which fall under the *Inspection* and *Government* of *Fortitude*, are in their *Excesses* naturally vexatious to the Mind, and always disturb and raise Tumults in it: For so *Wrath* and *Impatience* distract and alienate it from it self, confound its Thoughts
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and shuffle them together into a Heap of wild and disorderly Fancies; so *Malice*, *Envy* and *Revenge*, do fill it with anxious biting Thoughts, which like young Vipers gnaw the Womb that bears them, and fret and gall the wretched Mind which forms and gives them Entertainment. If we go into the other World with these Affections unmortify'd in us, they will not only be far more violent and outrageous than now, and we shall not only have a far quicker Sense of them than now, but this our sharp Sense of them will be pure and simple without any intermixture of Pleasure to soften and allay it. What exquisite *Devils* and *Tormentors* will they prove when an extreme *Rage* and *Hate*, *Envy* and *Revenge*, shall be altogether like so many hungry Vultures preying on our Hearts; and our Mind shall be continually *baited* and *worried* with all the furious Thoughts which these outrageous *Passions* can suggest to us: When with the meagre Look of Envy we shall gaze on the Regions of Happiness, and incessantly pine and grieve at the Felicities of those that inhabit them; when thro' a Sense of our own *Folly*, and of the miserable Effects of it, our *Rage* and *Impatience* shall be heightened and boil'd up into a *Diabolical Fury*; and when at the same time an inveterate *Malice* against all that we converse with, and a fierce Desire of *reveng-*
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ing our selves upon those that have contributed to our Ruin, shall, like a Wolf in our Breasts, be continually gnawing and feeding upon our Souls: What an insupportable Hell shall we be to our selves? Doubtless that *outward Hell*, to which bad Spirits are condemn'd, is very terrible, but as doubtless the worst of their Hell is *within* themselves, and their own devilish Passions are severer *Furies* to them than all those Devils that are without them.

To remove therefore this great Impediment of our Happiness, Christianity enjoins us to practise this necessary Virtue of *Fortitude*, by *moderating* our *Anger* and *Impatience*, by suppressing our *Envy*, and extinguishing all our unreasonable *Hatred* and *Desire* of *Revenge*. How much the Practice of this Virtue conduces to our eternal Happiness, is evident from hence, that all the Diseases and Distempers which our Minds are capable of, are nothing else but the Excesses of its *concupiscible* and *irascible Affections*, nothing but its being affected with *Good* and *Evil*, beyond those Limits and Measures which right *Reason* prescribes. Did we but love outward Goods according to the value at which true Reason rates them, we shou'd neither be vext with an *impatient Desire* of them while we want, nor disappointed of our Expectation while we enjoy them. When
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our Desires towards these outward Goods are reduc'd to that *Coolness* and *Moderation*, as neither to be impatient in the Pursuit, nor dissatisfy'd in the Enjoyment of them, it is impossible they shou'd give any Disturbance to our Minds: On the other hand, did we but take care to regulate our Resentments of outward Evils and Dangers, as *right Reason* advises, they would never be able to hurt or discompose our Minds; for *right Reason* advises, that we shou'd not so resent them, as to encrease and aggravate them; and he who follows her Advice, and conducts his *irascible Affections* by it, has a Mind that is elevated above the reach of Injury, that sits above the Clouds in a calm and quiet Region, and with a brave Indifferency hears the rolling Thunder grumble and burst under his Feet. When outward Evils fall upon timorous, peevish and malicious Spirits, like Sparks of Fire upon a Heap of Gun-powder, they presently blow them up and put them all in Combustion: When they happen to a *dispassionate* Mind, they fall like Stones upon a *Bed of Down*, where they lye easily and quietly, and are received with a calm and soft Compliance. The Health of a reasonable Soul consists in being perfectly reasonable, in having all its Affections perfectly subdu'd, and cloathed in the Livery of its Reason. While it is thus, it cannot be *diseas'd* in that spiri-

spiritual State, in which it will be wholly separated from all bodily Sense and Passion, because it has no Affection in it that can any way disturb or ruffle its calm and gentle Thoughts: And then feeling all within it self to be well, and as it shou'd be, every String tun'd into a perfect Harmony, every Motion and Affection corresponding with the most perfect Draughts and Models of its own Reason; it must needs highly approve of, and be perfectly satisfy'd with it self; and while it surveys its own Motions and Actions, it must necessarily have a most delicious Gust and Relish of them, they being all such as its best and purest Reason approves of, with a *full and ungainsaying* Judgment. And thus the Soul being cur'd of all irregular Affections, and remov'd from all corporeal Passion, will live in perfect Health and Vigor, and for ever enjoy within it self a Heaven of Content and Peace.

Another *Virtue* which appertains to a Man, consider'd merely as a *rational Creature*, is *Temperance*, which consists in not indulging our *bodily Appetites* to the Hurt and Prejudice of our *rational Nature*, or in refraining from those Excesses of *bodily Pleasures*, of *Eating, Drinking, and Venery*, which do either disorder our Reason, or indispose us to enjoy the purer Pleasures of the *Mind*.

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All Excesses of *bodily Pleasures* are naturally prejudicial to our Reason, as they indispose those *bodily Organs*, by which it operates; for so *Drunkennes* dilates the Brain, which is the Mint of the Understanding, and drowns those Images it stamps upon it, in a Flood of unwholesome Rheums and Moistures; and *Gluttony* clogs the *animal Spirits*, which are, as it were, the *Wings* of the *Mind*, and indisposes them for the highest and noblest Flights of Reason; so *Wantonness* chafes the Blood into *Feverish Heats*, and by causing it to boil up too fast in the *Brain*, disorders the Motions of the Spirits there, and so confounds the Ideas, that the Mind can have no clear or distinct Perception of them, by which means our Intellectual Faculties are very often interrupted and forc'd to sit still for want of proper Tools to work with; and so by often loitering, grow by Degrees listless and unactive, and at the last, are utterly indispos'd to any rational Operations.

Besides this, which must needs be a mighty Prejudice to our *rational Nature*; by too much familiarizing our selves to *bodily Pleasures*, we shall break off all our Acquaintance with spiritual ones, and grow by Degrees, such utter Strangers to them, that we shall never be able to relish and enjoy them, and our Soul will contract such an uxorious Fondness of the *Body*, as the *Shop*

of all the Pleasure it was ever acquainted with, that 'twill never be able to live happily without it. For tho' in its separate State, it cannot be suppos'd that the *Soul* will retain the Appetites of the Body, yet if while it is in the Body, it wholly abandons it self to corporeal Pleasures, it may, and doubtless will retain a vehement *hankering* after it, and longing to be reunited to it, which I conceive, is the only *Sensuality* that a separated Soul is capable of: For when such a Soul arrives into the Spiritual World, her having wholly accustom'd her self to *bodily Pleasures*, and never experienc'd any other, will necessarily render her incapable of enjoying the Pleasures of pure and blessed Spirits: Thus being utterly destitute of all her dear Delights and Satisfactions, which are such as she knows she can never enjoy but in Conjunction with the Body, all her Appetite and Longing must necessarily be an outrageous Desire of being embody'd again, that so she may be capable of repeating her old sensual Pleasures, and acting over the brutish Scene anew.

Hence among other Reasons it was, that the *Primitive Christians* did so severely abstain from *bodily Pleasures*, that by this means they might gently wean the Soul from the Body, and teach it beforehand to live upon the Delights of *separated Spirits*; that
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upon its Separation, it might drop into Eternity like Fruit from the Tree, with ease and willingness; and that by accustoming it before to *spiritual Pleasures* and *Delights*, it might acquire such a savoury Sense and Relish of them, as to be able when it came into the spiritual World, to live wholly upon them, and to be so entirely satisfy'd with them, as not to be endlessly vex'd with a tormenting Desire of returning to the *Body* again: They did so use them, that, as much as in them lay, they might wean their Souls from all such Pleasures, that so they might have the better Appetite to the spiritual Food, upon which they were to live for ever. Hitherto tend all those *Precepts* concerning *abstaining from worldly Lusts which war against our Souls, and mortifying the Deeds of the Body, and keeping under the Body, and being temperate in all things, to watch and to be sober, and walking honestly as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Excess of Wine, Revelings and Banquettings.* The Sense of all which is, That we should not indulge our bodily Appetites, to the vitiating and depraving our spiritual; that we should not plunge our selves so far in the *Pleasures of the Flesh*, as to drown our Sense and Perception of divine and heavenly Enjoyments, but should so subdue and mortifie our Sensuality, as that

it may not have Dominion over us, nor be the prevalent Delight and Complacency of our Souls; but that the commanding Biass, and swaying Propension within us, may be towards divine and spiritual Enjoyments.

'Tis at the first view evident, how much the Practice of this Virtue conduces to our future Happiness; for by taking us off from all Excess of *bodily Pleasure*, it disposes us to enjoy the Pleasures of Heaven, and *connaturalizes* our Souls to them. Thus when after a long Exercise of Temperance we come to leave the *Body*, our *Soul* will be so loosen'd from it before-hand, and render'd so indifferent to the Delights of it, that we shall be able to part both with it and them, without any great *Regret* or *Reluctancy*, and live from them for ever without any disquieting longings or *bankerings* after them. For as when we are grown up by Age and Experience to a Sense of more *manly* Pleasures, we despise Nuts and Rattles, which when we were *Children* we accounted our Happiness, and shou'd have reckon'd our selves undone had we been depriv'd of them; so when by the Practice of a severe Repentance we have acquir'd a thorough Sense of the Pleasures of Virtue and Religion, we shall look upon all our *bodily Pleasures* as the little Toys and Fooleries of our Infant State, with which we pleas'd our Childish Fancies

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when we knew no better, our Minds being for the main reconcil'd to rational and spiritual Pleasures. We shall put off all Remains of bodily Lusts with our Bodies, and so fly away into the spiritual World with none but pure and spiritual Appetites about us, where meeting with an infinite Fulness of spiritual Joys and Pleasures, of which we had many a Foretaste in the Body, our predispos'd Mind will presently close with and feed upon them, with such unspeakable Content and Satisfaction, as will ravish it for ever from the Thoughts of all other Pleasures.

Another of those Virtues which belong to a Man, consider'd meerly as a *rational Animal*, is *Humility*, which consists in a modest and lowly Opinion of our selves, and of our *Acquisitions, Merits* or *Endowments*, or in not valuing our selves beyond what is due and just, upon the Account of any Good we are possess'd of, whether it be *internal* or *external*. For *Pride* or an over-weening *Self-Conceit* is the Bane of all our Virtue and Happiness, as has been sufficiently shewn under its proper Article, in the first Volume of this *Ladies Library*, to which therefore we must refer. We shou'd be so far from repining and murmuring at God, for not rewarding us as liberally as others, that we shou'd be thoroughly sensible that he has

been bountiful to us, infinitely beyond our Desert or Expectation; that 'twas not out of a fond Partiality or blind *Respect* of *Persons*, that he rais'd others to higher Degrees of *Glory* than our selves, but out of a Principle of strict *Justice* that exactly balances and adjusts its Rewards, according to the Degrees of our Desert and Improvement. The Sense of which will not only compose our Minds into a perfect Satisfaction, but also continually excite us to those beatifical Acts of *Love* and *Praise*, *Thanksgiving* and *Adoration*. Thus will Humility tune and compose us for Heaven, and only cast us down like Balls, that we may rebound the higher in *Glory* and *Happiness*.

'Tis true indeed, the immediate Product of this, and all the other Virtues already treated of under this Head, is only, at least chiefly, privative Happiness, or the Happiness of *Rest* and *Indolence*, which consists in not being miserable, or in a perfect Cessation from all such Acts as are hurtful and injurious to a rational Spirit.

Now besides this *privative*, there is a *positive* part of Happiness, which consists not in Rest but in Motion, in the vigorous Exercise of our rational Faculties, upon such Objects as are most suitable to them. And to the obtaining of this part of our Happiness, there are kinds of Virtues necessary to
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be put in practice, as we are *rational Creatures*, and these are Virtues of a *divine Nature* as the others are of a *human*.

As we are *rational Creatures*, related to God, we are oblig'd to think of and contemplate the Beauty and Perfection of his Nature.

For the natural Use of our Understanding is to contemplate *Truth*, and therefore the more of *Truth* and *Reality* there is in any knowable Object, and the farther it is remov'd from *Falshood* and *Non-entity*, the more the Understanding is concern'd to contemplate and think upon it. God therefore being the most true and real Object, as he stands remov'd by the Necessity of his *Existence* from all Possibility of not being, must needs be the most perfect Theme of our Understanding, the best and greatest Subject on which it can employ its Meditations. And besides that he is the most true and real of all Beings, he is also the Source and Spring of all Truth and Reality: His Power, conducted by his Wisdom and Goodness, being the Cause not only of all that is, but of all that either shall be or can be. And is it fit that our *Understanding*, which was made to *contemplate*, should wholly overlook the Fountain of it? But besides this too, that he is the greatest Truth himself, and the Cause of every thing that is

true and real, he is the Sovereign of Beings, the most amiable and perfect, as he includes in his infinite Essence all possible Perfection both in Kind and Degree. And what a monstrous Irreverence is it, for Minds that were fram'd to the Contemplation of *Truth*, to pass by such a great and glorious one without any *Regard* or *Observance*, as if he stood for a Cypher in the World, and were not worthy to be thought upon? He is besides all this, a *Truth*, in which, above all others, we are most nearly concern'd, as he is not only the *Father* and Prop of our Beings, and the *Consolation* of our *Lives*, but the sole *Arbiter* of our Fate too, upon whom our everlasting well or ill Being depends. And what can we be more concern'd to think and meditate upon, than this great Being from whom we sprang, in whom we live and breathe, and from whom we are to expect all the Evil or Good that we can fear or hope for? All which consider'd, there is no doubt to be made but that our Understanding was chiefly made for God, to look up to him, and contemplate his Being and Perfections. "Till we have thoroughly fixt our Minds and Wills upon God, we do naturally affect such an *Infinity* of Objects, that our Desires are always reaching at new *Pleasures*, and carry'd forth after new *Possessions*; by which the Soul declares
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that it is not to be perfectly pleas'd with finite *Truth* or *Good*, and that it can never be satisfy'd but in Union with God, who is an *infinite Ocean* of Truth and Goodness. For as for all other Beings, they are so very shallow, that we quickly see to the very Bottom of their Truth and Reality; and when we have done that, we have no more in them, to feed and entertain our Understandings; and when we have exhausted the Truth of *finite* Beings, we must either cease to understand any more, which wou'd be to deprive our noblest Faculty of any farther Pleasure, or we must at last fix our Mind upon God, in whom it will find such *infinite* Truth as will be sufficient to exercise it throughout all its *infinite* Duration. But unless we do now acquaint our Minds with God, by frequent thinking and meditating upon him, we shall by Degrees grow such Strangers to him, that by that time we go into the other World, we shall be so far from being pleas'd with contemplating him, that we shall look upon him, as an uncouth Object, and out of distaste avert and turn our Eyes from him. We shall be continually flying away from him as *Bats* and *Owls* do from the Light of the *Sun*, and never be able to compose our awkward Thoughts into a fixt Contemplation of his Glory. And when we have thus banish'd our selves from the only Ob-

ject that can for ever bless and satisfy our Understanding, that can keep it in everlasting Exercise and Motion, and feed its greedy Thoughts eternally with fresh and glorious Discoveries, we have utterly lost one of the sweetest Pleasures that human Nature is capable of, and so must necessarily pine and languish under an eternal Discontentedness.

Tho' to meditate closely upon God may at first be irksome and tedious to our unexpect'd Minds, yet when by the constant Practice of it we have worn off that Strangeness towards God, which renders the Thoughts of him so troublesome to us, and by frequent Converses are grown better acquainted with him, we shall be by Degrees so pleas'd and satisfy'd with the Thoughts of him, that we shall not know how to live without them; and our *Minds* at last will be touch'd with such a lively Sense of his attractive Beauties, that we shall never be well but while we are with him. He will thus become the constant Companion of our Thoughts, and the daily Theme of our *Meditations*. Nothing in the World will then be so grateful and acceptable to us, as to retire now and then from it, and converse with God in holy Contemplation. And tho' by reason of our present *Circumstances* and *Necessities* there is no Remedy, but our Thoughts must be often diverted from him, and forc'd

to attend to our secular Occasions; yet after they have been us'd awhile to God, we shall find they will never be so well pleas'd, nor so much at Ease, as when they are retir'd from every thing but God, and compos'd and settled into divine Meditations. When we go into the other World, where we shall be remov'd from these troublesome *Circumstances* and *Necessities* which did here so often divert our Thoughts from God, our Minds, which have been so long accustomed and habituated to him, will immediately fasten upon him, and entirely devote themselves to the Contemplation of his Nature and Glory. For our Minds being already strongly inclin'd and byass'd towards God, by those grateful Foretastes we have had of him in the Warmths of our Meditation; when we come into the still and quiet Regions of the *Blessed*, where we shall immediately have a more close and intimate View of him than ever, all our Thoughts will naturally run towards him, and be so captivated with the first sight of his Glory, that we shall never be able to look off again as long as Eternity endures; but one View will invite us to another, and what we see, will so transport and ravish us, that we shall still desire to see farther and farther.

Oh happy Mind! what Tongue can express thy Joys and Raptures, that being thus

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in Conjunction with God, art always fill'd with glorious *Ideas*, and compast round with the Wonders of his Perfection? At every Glance thou seest some new *Charms*, with every Thought makest some vast *Discovery*! Oh! the transporting Pleasures of that blessed *Vision*, which I now can hardly think of without Extasy! With what Delight will my wing'd Thoughts hover in the Light of God's Countenance, which thro' every Moment of Eternity will be still revealing new Beauties to us, such as will not only for ever employ, but for ever enflame our Meditations.

As we are *rational Creatures*, related to God, we are not only oblig'd to *think of* and *contemplate* him, but also *humbly to worship and adore him*.

Out of a most awful Esteem, and most profound Reverence of his superexcellent Majesty, and boundless Perfection, we shou'd bow down our Souls before him, and address our selves to him by *Invocation* and *Prayer*, by *Praise* and *Thanksgiving*, as to the all-sufficient, independent, and sole Disposer of every good and perfect Gift. And in these our Addresses we should outwardly express this our reverential Esteem of him, by such humble Gestures of Body as are most apt to testify it to others. Of this Duty we have discours'd in the foregoing Pages,
and

and shall take Occasion to speak farther in those that follow. If we are of the Elect, 'twill eternally be our Business and Employment to admire and extol the Perfections of God, of which he will every Moment make new and glorious Discoveries; and to celebrate with grateful Acknowledgments the infinite Riches of his Bounty, of which we will every Moment have fresh and sweet Experiences. Thus, while by continual Acts of Praise and Thanksgiving we endeavour to affect our Minds with a due Sense of the Goodness and Bounty of God, we are practising before-hand the *Musick of Heaven*, and taking out the *Songs of Sion*, that so when we go from hence, we may be qualify'd and prepar'd to bear a part in the celestial Choir. True Devotion consists in a quick and lively Sense of the infinite Majesty, Beauty, and Benignity of God, and most effectually disposes the Mind to all those divine and spiritual Exercises in which the State of Heaven consists.

As we are *rational Creatures*, related to God, we are also oblig'd to an *unfeign'd Love of and Complacency in him*.

And this Obligation lies from us to him, both on the Account of what he is in *himself*, the most amiable of Beings, in whom there is an harmonious Concurrence of all imaginable Beauties and Perfections, of Wisdom

dom and Goodness, of Justice and Mercy, and every other amiable thing that can claim or attract a reasonable Affection; (all which, in infinite Degrees, are *contemper'd* together in his Nature) and also on Account of his infinite Kindness and Beneficence to us, in the many Instances mention'd in every Article of this Design.

If ever we intend to grow up to the State of the Blessed in Heaven, we must endeavour to kindle and blow up the *Love* of God in our Hearts. In order to this, we must be frequently representing to our Minds the infinite Reason we have to love him, and pressing it upon our selves, with the vast Obligations he has laid upon us, spreading them fairly before our Thoughts in all their endearing Circumstances. We must ever and anon set our cold and frozen Souls before those melting Flames of his Love and Beauty, and never leave urging and pressing them with this Consideration, till we feel the heavenly Fire begin to kindle in our Bosoms. Above all things, we must take Care by the constant Practice of what is agreeable to God's Nature, to reconcile our Minds and Tempers to him; for, 'till this is done, we can never be habitually pleas'd or delighted in him. But when once, by the Practice of those eternal Rules of Goodness that are founded in his blessed Nature, we have so
far

far reconcil'd our Natures to him, as that our Hearts and his stand bent the same way, and are for the main alike inclin'd and dispos'd, then we are prepar'd for, and made proper and convenient *Fuel* to receive this heavenly *Flame of Love* from him. And when this is once so thoroughly kindled in our Hearts, as that we are habitually well-pleas'd and delighted in him, so as to rejoice in his Happiness, acquiesce in his Will, and meditate on his Beauty and Goodness with an unfeign'd Complacency of Soul, we are then in the same State, in *Kind*, tho' not in *Degree*, with the blessed People of Heaven.

And how inconceivably happy will that glorious State be, when we shall always live in view of the most *lovely* Object, and always love him as much as we are able, and be able to love him a thousand times more than we can now imagine? For the longer we *View*, the more shall we *know* him, and the more we *know* him, the better we shall love him. Thus thro' everlasting Ages our *Love* shall be *stretching* and *extending* it self upon this infinite Beauty and Loveliness; he will never be absent from us, but continually entertaining our amorous Minds with the Prospect of his infinite Beauties; we shall ever feel his Love to us in the most sensible and endearing Effects, even in the Glory of that Crown
which

which he will set upon our Heads; and in the ravishing Sweetness of those Joys, he will infuse into our Hearts: We shall then experience the Continuation of his *Love* in the continual *Fruition* of all that an everlasting Heaven means; and be convinc'd as well by the perpetuity of his Goodness to us, as by the immutability of his Nature, that he is an unchangeable *Lover*. In a word, we shall there find him a most happy Being, happy beyond our vastest Wishes of his Love; we shall not only delight in him, as he is infinitely *lovely* and *amiable*, but rejoice and triumph in him too, as he is infinitely blessed and happy; for Love unites the Interests as well as the Hearts of *Lovers*, and mutually appropriates them to each others Joys and Felicities: We shall in that *State* of *Blessedness* share in the *Felicity* of God, proportionably to the Degree of our Love to him; for the more we love him, the more we shall still espouse his Interest; and the more we are interested in his Happiness, the happier we must be, and the more we must enjoy of it.

Thus God's Happiness is, as it were, the common Bank and Treasury of all *divine Lovers*, in which they have every one a Share, and of which proportionably to the Degrees of their Love to him, they do actually participate to all *Eternity*. Cou'd they but love him

him as much as he deserves, that is *infinitely*, they wou'd be as *infinitely* blessed and happy as he; for then all his *Happiness* wou'd be theirs, and they wou'd have the same delightful Sense and feeling of it, as if it were all transplanted into their own Bosoms. God therefore being an *infinitely happy, infinitely loving and infinitely lovely* Being, when once we are admitted to dwell for ever in his blessed Presence, our Love to him can be productive of nothing but sweet and ravishing Emotions; for the immense Perfections it will then find in its Object, must necessarily rescue it from all those Fears and Jealousies, Grievs and Displeasures, that are mingled with our carnal *Loves*, and render it a pure Delight and Complacency. When once it is grown up to the Perfection of the heavenly State 'twill be all Heaven, 'twill be an eternal Paradise of Delights in us, a living Spring, whence Rivers of Pleasures will issue for evermore. Oh! blessed State, in which my Heart shall be brimful of Love, and my Love shall triumph alone with me, and be all Joy and Ravishment, being remov'd for ever out of the Noise and Neighbourhood of all these disquieting Affections, which here are wont to mingle with, and continually disturb and incommode it.

As we are rational Creatures related to God, we are *farther oblig'd attentively to imitate*

mitate him in all his imitable Perfections and Actions.

'Tis an allow'd Maxim, that that which is most perfect in its kind, is to be the Rule and Measure of all those individual Natures that are contain'd under it: God therefore being the most perfect of all in the whole kind of reasonable Beings, must needs be the supreme Pattern of all those Individuals that are under him, and so far as any of them disagree from him, so far are they defective in their Natures. God is the *Archetype* of every reasonable Creature, and Man is his Imitation and Image; for he is a Being that is infinitely reasonable in all his *Volitions* and *Actions*; that has not the least intermixture either of Humour or Folly, or Prejudices in his Choices, but is always, and in every thing govern'd by his own pure and all comprehending Wisdom. Upon which Account he ought to be own'd, look'd upon by every reasonable Being, as the sovereign Standard and Pattern of their *Natures*, and so far as any *reasonable* Nature moves or acts *counter* to his, so far it ought to be look'd upon as monstrous and unnatural in its Kind: And as it is monstrous in a human Body to have its Parts displaced, its Mouth opened in its Belly, or its Legs growing out of its Shoulders, because these are unnatural Positions, which are directly contrary to the true Idea,

dea, Form, and Figure of a human Body ; so every reasonable Nature that does not imitate and take after God's, but chuses and acts contrary to him, is so far monstrous and misshapen, because 'tis writh'd and distorted into a Figure that is directly contrary to its natural Pattern and Exemplar : while it continues so, it is not capable of true Happiness ; for that which renders God so infinitely happy in himself, is not so much the Almighty Power he has to defend himself from foreign Hurts and Injuries, as the exact Agreement of all his Motions and Actions, with the all-comprehending Reason of his own Mind.

In Prosecution of its great Design, which is to make us happy, the Gospel strictly requires us to be always *imitating*, so far as they are *imitable*, the Perfections and Actions of our Heavenly Father ; to endeavour to form our Natures to his, to rectifie the Features and Lineaments of our Souls by his most amiable Idea ; to be continually framing our Temper by the noble Pattern of his Mercy and Goodness, his Justice, Purity and Wisdom ; that so, being *new cast* as it were in the perfect Mould of his Nature, we may be transform'd into living Images of him. *Be ye therefore*, says the Apostle, *Imitators, or Followers of God, as dear Children.* Again, *Be pure as God is pure, merciful as*
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he is merciful, and perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect: And in another place, Put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.

What an infinite Satisfaction must that give to the Mind, when surveying it self round about, it shall find every thing within it self exactly as it *ought to be*, every Faculty, to its utmost Power and Capacity, perfectly corresponding with its original Pattern and Exemplar? when it shall interchangeably turn its Eyes from God to it self; and compare Grace with Grace, and Feature with Feature, and perceive what amiable Consent and Agreement there is between its own Copy and his fair Original; what a pure *Imitation* of God its Life is, and how exactly *Deiform* all its Motions and Actions are? When, I say, our blessed Minds shall always find themselves in this godlike Posture and Condition, oh! what incomparable Content and Satisfaction will they take in themselves? With what ravishing Pleasure will they ever review their own Motions, which being immediately copy'd from the Nature of God, will be such as its severest Reason will be always forc'd to commend and approve? How will the happy Mind be then always triumphing in its own Purity, and enjoy within it self an everlasting Heaven of Content and Peace? How will

will it continually be crown'd with the Applauses of its own Reason? All its Actions will have the joyful Ecchoes of a well-pleas'd Conscience, continually resounding after them. Thus, by *imitating* God's Perfections, we shall *imitate* his Happiness too, and shall for ever take after him, not only in respect of the Rectitude of our Natures, but also in the most blessed and comfortable Enjoyment of our selves. Besides that, our Resemblance of God will everlastingly dispose us to *Love*, and our *Love* to contemplate and adore him; for all these blessed Acts do reciprocally further and promote each other; just like contiguous Bodies, that are plac'd in a Circle, the first of which being moved, thrusts on the second, the second the third, and the third the last, if there be no more between, and then the last thrusts on the first, and so round again in the same Order. If we carry therefore with us into Eternity, a Frame and Disposition of Nature like God's, we shall always so *imitate* as still to *love* him, so *love* as still to *contemplate* him, so *contemplate* as still to *adore* him, so *adore* as still to *imitate*, and *love*, and *contemplate* him anew.

As we are reasonable Creatures, related to God, we are bound to resign up, and submit our selves to his blessed Will and Disposal.

For

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For God has a just Dominion over all, founded in his own infinite Power, that does not, like other Dominions, result to him from any external Acts or Atchievements, but is the eternal Prerogative of his own Nature. For he, as well as all other Beings, has a Freedom to exercise his own Abilities, so far as it is just and lawful; but being infinitely paramount to all other Powers whatsoever, he can be subject to no superior Authority, nor consequently be obliged by any other Law but that of his own Nature. Whatever he can do, he can do justly, if it be not contrary to the infinite Perfections of his Nature; for his Power being infinite and unconfined, as well as his *Wisdom*, *Justice* and *Goodness*, does sufficiently warrant him to do whatsoever is consistent with them; otherwise he would be infinitely Powerful in vain: And therefore, since he can exercise a Dominion over all, he must needs have an eternal Right to do it, so far as his own *Wisdom*, *Justice* and *Goodness* will permit, which are the only Laws by which he can be bound, in the Exercise of his infinite Power and Ability; and therefore while he governs us by such Rules and Laws as are convenient to his own Nature, his own Greatness and Power, which exalts him above all other Laws or Authority, sufficiently warrants him

so

so to do: And being thus rightfully enthron'd, by the infinite Pre-eminence of his own Power and Majesty, all other Beings, so far as they are capable, stand immutably oblig'd to submit and resign themselves up to his Government.

But besides that we are oblig'd to him as he is God, we are also bound to him as he is our *Creator*. For there is always a Power acquir'd by *Benefits*, where there is none *antecedently*, especially where the Benefit conferr'd is no less than that of our Being, which is the Case between us and God. And this is such a Benefit, as is sufficient to entitle him to us, by an absolute and unalienable Property, tho' he had no antecedent Right of Dominion over us by vertue of his infinite Greatness. Before he created us, or any other Being, he had free Power to act any thing that lay within the Compass of *Just* and *Lawful*; which *Just* and *Lawful* was not definable by any other Law but that of his own Nature; and tho' since his Creation his Power is not more, yet doubtless by giving us our Beings, he has laid new Obligations upon us to obey him. For now, deriving our selves, as we do, from him, we are bound by all the Ties of Equity and Justice, to render back our selves to him, and to submit those Powers to his Dominion, which are the Effects and Offspring of his

his Bounty. For what can be more just and equal, than that that Will which is the Cause of our Beings, shou'd be the Law and Rule of our Actions ; than that we shou'd serve him with those Powers we deriv'd from him, and render him back the Fruits of his own Plantation? For now we are not our own but God's, and he alone has Power to dispose of us. Whenever we dispose of our selves contrary to his Will and Pleasure, we do not only invade his Property, but employ the Spoils of it against him ; and while we continue thus doing, it is not possible we shou'd ever be happy. For besides that while we continue in Rebellion against him, we are in actual Confederacy with Hell ; (*Rebellion being as the Sin of Witchcraft*) Rebels against God are, like Witches, in League with the Devil, which is the genuine Comment on this Text. Such Rebels are list'd Voluntiers under those infernal Powers, who for blowing the Trumpet of *Rebellion in Heaven* were banish'd thence six thousand Years ago, and have ever since been raising Forces in this lower World against God ; and all who are Confederates with them, will partake of their Portion in the Lake, that burns with unquenchable Fire to all Eternity.

It cannot be suppos'd that the wise Sovereign of the World should be so unconcern'd

cern'd for his own Authority, as to suffer his Creatures to spurn and affront it, without manifesting his Displeasure against them, in some dire and sensible Effects. And when once he is implacably set against us, he will more or less let loose his Power upon us, and make us feel his wrathful Resentments, by infusing supernatural Horrors into our Souls, and scourging our guilty and defenceless Spirits with Inspirations of dire and frightful Thoughts. God has imprinted a Dread of his own Power and Majesty so deeply on our Natures, that we are not able, with all our Arts of Self-deceit, wholly to obliterate and deface it: And tho' in this Life we may sometimes suppress and stupify our Sense of God, yet even here, in spite of our selves, 'twill ever and anon be returning upon us. If when we have done what we know is offensive to that invisible Majesty we stand in awe of, we do but suffer our selves seriously to reflect upon it, there presently arises in our Minds a swarm of horrid Thoughts and dismal Expectations. And if in this present State, in which we have so many Salves for our wounded Spirits, so many Pleasures and Self-delusions to charm our natural Dread of God, our over-charg'd Consciences do notwithstanding recoil upon us, and alarm us with such dismal bodeings, what will they do hereafter,

VOL. III. I when

when all those Pleasures are remov'd, and all those Self-delusions baffled with which we were wont to sooth and divert them? We shall then doubtless be continually stung with sharp and dire Reflections, and our Consciences, like tragick Scenes, be all hung round with the Ensigns of Horror. Then shall the Dread of God perpetually haunt us like a grim Fury, and the Terror of his offended Majesty strike us into an everlasting Trembling and Agony; for the *Devils themselves believe and tremble*: The same will be our Lot, if we go into the other World habitual Rebels to God: Our deep and inveterate Malice against him, will still hurry us to incense and provoke him; and then our natural Dread of his Power and Majesty will break into frightful and horrible Thoughts, and so be continually revenging upon us, those our continual Provocations of him. Our Sense of our Unlikeness to him will ever fill us with Shame and Confusion, and that of our *Rebellion* against him, continually strike us into Fear and Amazement.

To prevent which, our *Holy Religion*, which does so industriously consult our Happiness, requires us now to *submit our selves to God, to live to God, to present our selves living Sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, to yield our selves unto God, and our Members*

as Instruments of Righteousness unto God. By all which is to be understood, that we shou'd endeavour so to affect our Minds with the Sense of God's Authority over us, and the manifold Reasons of our Obedience to him, as to be firmly and constantly resolv'd within our selves, neither to chuse any thing that he forbids, nor to refuse any thing that he commands; that we shou'd set him up a Throne in our Hearts, a fix'd and prevailing Resolution of *Obedience*, that therein he may sit and reign, and have the absolute Empire of all our inward Motions and outward Actions. In a word, that we shou'd acquire such an habitual Respect to, and Reverence of, his Sovereign Authority, that no Temptation from within or without us, may be able to countermand it, or to seduce us from our Duty, into any wilful Course of Rebellion against him. And when once we have fram'd our Mind into this obediential Temper, we are in a forward Preparation for Heaven.

By being thus reduc'd to a perfect Submission to the Will of God, we shall therein find our selves incomparably happy. Our Wills being always determin'd by the Will of God, we shall be perfectly eas'd of all the Trouble and Distraction of chusing. Our Mind will no longer hover in Suspence, nor be divided between contrary Reasons,

but all its Thoughts will glide gently on, in a calm and quiet Channel, without ever being toss'd and bandy'd to and fro, by cross and opposite Deliberations. It will no sooner know the Will of God, but 'twill rest in it immediately, with a free Assent and uncontroull'd Approbation. It will, upon new Occasions, be free from the trouble of forming new Choices and Resolutions, being already fix'd, under all Events, to one steady Course of Motion; and immoveably resolv'd, whatever befalls, ever to do what God wou'd have it. Our Will, thus perfectly acquiescing in God, as in its proper Place and Element, will no longer dispute, as it was wont to do, no longer waver between two Load-stones; but always obey upon the first Motion, and follow him for ever without Deliberation. In which happy State we shall be no longer ground between those countermoving Millstones, the *Law in our Minds*, and the *Law in our Members*; but being entirely resign'd to God, we shall obey him with a full Current of Inclination. What a mighty ease must this be to the *Soul*, especially considering, that by being thus entirely *subject* to God, it will not only be releas'd from the trouble of deliberating and chusing, but also thoroughly warranted of the Goodness and Rectitude of its own Choices? For so far

as we are subject to God, our Wills are his, and so are our Actions too; and while they are so, we can have no reason to mistrust that they are bad in themselves, or that he is angry and displeas'd at them. And whereas, *rebellious* Souls are perpetually haunted with two restless *Furies*, the *Shame* of their *Guilt*, and the *Fear* of their *Danger*, which even here give them more *Disturbance* than all their *Sins* can give them *Pleasure* and *Delight*; when once we are perfectly subject to God, we shall be for ever discharg'd of them both, and then will our happy Minds be always as *Courageous* as *Truth*, and as *Confident* as *Innocence* itself.

As by our perfect *Submission* to God, we shall be wholly releas'd from *Fears* and *Doubts*, and sufficiently warranted in our own *Choices*, so we shall be abundantly satisfy'd, both of the *Wisdom* and *Success* of them. For then we shall be assur'd, by a sweet and happy *Experience*, that whatever God commands us to do, he most certainly knows that it is for our *Good*, and that that is the *Reason* why he commands it. While we *chuse* what God wou'd have us, our Wills are guided by his *Wisdom*, and so in every genuine *Act* of *Obedience* we are as *infallible* as *Omniscience* it self. When therefore we are perfectly *resign'd* to God, we shall always *will* and *act*, with as much

Confidence and *Assurance* of a happy and prosperous Success, as if we our selves were infinitely wise, and had a perfect Comprehension of all possible Issues and Events. And while wretched Rebels grope about under the Conduct of their own blind Wills, and for the most part do they know not *what*, and go they know not *where* themselves, but live by *chance*, and act at random; our Wills and Actions being wholly steer'd by an all-wise Will, which never fails to measure them by the best Rules, and point them to the best Ends; we shall always proceed upon the most certain Grounds, and be infallibly assur'd, that every thing we *will* or *do* shall conspire to our Good.

And whereas when Men know not what may happen upon such an Action, and are not able to pry out all those hidden Events which lurk in the Womb of their own Designs, they always act with *Caution* and *Anxiety*, and are doubtful and tremulous in their Motions; when once we are sure of a good Event, we still go on with Courage and Chearfulness, and so we shall ever do, when we ever perfectly *will* and *act* under the Command of God: For we shall then see all good Issues before us; and be firmly assur'd from that infallible Wisdom which governs *his Will*, and by *his ours*, that every thing we *will* or *do* shall be crown'd with

a happy Effect. And this will for ever wing our Souls with an unwearied Vigour and Activity, and render each Act of our *Obedience*, unspeakably *sweet* and *delightful* to us. And now, oh! blessed Mind! what Tongue or Thought can reach thy Happiness? who living in a most perfect Subjection to an all-good, and all-wise Will, art never in the least concern'd or troubled, to *debate* and *deliberate* what to chuse; but dost everlastingly embrace and follow, what an infinite Goodness and an infinite Wisdom has chosen for thee?

As we are *reasonable Creatures* related to God, we are oblig'd, not only to resign our Wills entirely up to his, but *cheerfully to trust in, and depend upon him*, for he is the Prop and Center of all the mould'ring *Creation*: The almighty *Atlas* that bears it upon his Shoulders, and keeps it from sinking into Ruin; we, and every Creature in Heaven and Earth hang upon him; and if he shakes us off but for a moment, we presently drop into nothing and perish. For cou'd we *exist* of our selves this *present Moment*, we might as well have done so the *Moment before*, and may as well do so the *Moment after*, and so backwards and forwards to all Eternity; and unless we had such a Fulness of Essence in us, as to exist of our selves from all Eternity past, to all Eternity

nity to come; it is impossible we should exist so much as one *Moment*, without new Supplies from the infinite and independent Fountain of Being. And what can be more fit and reasonable, than that we who are thus born up by him, shou'd freely trust in, and depend upon him; that we shou'd *build* our *Hope* upon the *Prop* of our *Existence*, and make him the Stay of our Confidence, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*; especially, considering what a proper Object of Truth and Dependence he is, and that not only as he is the sovereign Disposer of all those Issues and Events which concern us, but also as he is infinitely Wise, and always understands what is good or hurtful to us, and as he stands engag'd, both by his own essential Goodness and free *Promise*, never to fail those that put their *Trust* in him; but to manage all their Affairs to their eternal Interest and Advantage. And in whom can we more rationally confide, than in a Being of infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power? that always *knows* what is best for us, that always *wills* what he *knows* to be so, and always *does* what he *wills*.

How extremely unfit are we to make *Choices* for our selves, since in most Particulars 'tis almost an Equality, whether what we *chuse* will prove our *Food* or our *Poyson*!

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But now, God being the supreme Orderer and Disposer of things, and having the first Link of every Chain of Causes in his own Hands, must needs have an entire Comprehension of all the intermediate ones, from the *Beginning* to the *End*; and his Power being not only the Cause of all *actual* Events, but also of the *Possibility* of those that shall never be *actual*, he must needs discern the utmost Issues and Concomitants of every *possible* as well as of every *future* Event, and perfectly understand, not only what will be beneficial and injurious to us, but also what might be. Thus 'tis impossible for him to be mistaken in his *Choice*, because he knows as well before-hand what things wou'd be so, if they *were*, as what they *are*, when they do actually *exist*. Upon the whole therefore, 'tis doubtless of inestimable Advantage to us, to be in the Hands of God: And next to Hell itself, I know nothing is more formidable than for God to let us alone, and give us up to our own Wills and Desires. And shou'd he call to us from Heaven, and tell us that he was resolv'd to cross our desires no more, but to comply with all our Wishes, let the Event prove good or bad, we shou'd have just reason to look upon our selves as the most forlorn and abandon'd Creatures on this side Hell, as Persons excluded from the greatest Blessing.

sing that belongs to a Creature: and if we had any Hope of his Re-acceptance of us, it would be infinitely our Interest to resign back our selves, and all our Concerns, to him, and on our bended Knees to beseech him above all things, not to leave us to our selves, or throw us from his Care and Conduct. It being therefore, upon all Accounts, so highly fit and reasonable, and so much our Interest and Advantage, that we should freely trust our selves, and all our Affairs, into the Hands of God, and depend upon him for the good Success of all our honest Endeavours and Undertakings, that we shou'd acquiesce in his Disposal of Things, and under all outward Events be pleas'd and satisfy'd with his Conduct, as knowing that however things may happen to us, they cannot be otherwise than as the wise and good God is pleas'd either to permit, or to order and determine them: This, I say, being so fit in itself, and so much for our Interest, it is impossible that without it we can ever be happy here or hereafter.

When we consider what a mighty Stake we have in his Hands, how all our Fortunes lie at his Feet, and how easily he can frown us into nothing, or spurn us into a Condition ten thousand times worse than nothing, whenever he pleases; how can we be otherwise secure in our own Minds, or avoid being

ing extremely anxious or solicitous; but by firmly relying on his Truth and Goodness: To the want of which is to be attributed all that carking Care, tormenting Fear, and disquieting Thoughts, which perpetually haunt the Minds of Men; and from these thorny Disquietudes it is impossible they should ever be wholly free, no not in Heaven itself, 'till they have wrought their Minds to a perfect Trust and Confidence in God. For we shall be altogether as dependent upon God for our *heavenly*, as we are for our *earthly* Happiness; because, tho' all those Acts of heavenly Virtue, in which our heavenly Happiness consists, will be much more in our own Power than any of these worldly Goods are, yet they will be no longer in our Power than God shall think fit to enable us to chuse and act, and to support us in our Being and Existence, which then we shall sensibly perceive entirely depends upon the all-enlivening Vigour of his vital Breath. And therefore tho' he has promis'd to continue our Being in that most blessed State for ever; yet unless we perfectly trust in his Veracity, our Minds will be continually disturb'd with anxious and mis-giving Thoughts: We shall be afraid least one time or other he shou'd forget his Promise, and upon some unknown Reason or Emergency withdraw from us that Influence.

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of his upholding Power, upon which our Being and Well-being depends, and let us drop into *nothing*. And the greater our Happiness is, the more we shall be afraid to lose it, because we shou'd be always sensible that it entirely depends upon the Pleasure of God, whose Truth and Goodness we cannot perfectly confide in. From all which Considerations it is plain, that if we were plac'd in the midst of Heaven, with a misgiving distrustful Mind of God; That wou'd imbitter all the Joys of it, and give them a harsh and ungrateful Farewel. For the fearful Apprehensions we shou'd continually have of being thrust out of Heaven again, and tumbled headlong from all Glory, wou'd be such a continual Affliction to us, that we shou'd e'en pine away our happy Eternity for fear of being eternally depriv'd of it. So impossible it is for any dependent Being to be happy, without an entire *Trust* and *Confidence* in God, upon whom its Being and Happiness depend.

There are many Places of the *Gospel* that teach us this entire Confidence in God: *Commit the keeping of your Souls to God in well-doing*, says St. Peter. *Trust in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy*, says St. Paul. And again, *Do not trust in your selves, but in God, who raiseth the Dead*. All which, and much more to the same purpose, is said

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to press and engage us to a constant and chearful Reliance upon God, and to endeavour to affect our Minds with a deep Sense of his over-ruling Providence, and a full Assurance of the Goodness of all those great Designs he is driving on in the World; and accordingly to acquiesce in and embrace all Events, as the Token of his Love and Favour, and always to live upon this Persuasion, that it is infinitely better for us to be in God's Hands than in our own, and that he knows much better how to dispose of us and our Affairs than we do, and that he will take Care to dispose of them as much to our Advantage as we our selves shou'd, if we knew as much as he does.

Now tho' by reason of those strong Impressions, which sensible things in this Life of Sense make upon us, we should not always be able so firmly to rely upon and repose our selves in God's invincible Power, as not to be at all disquieted about the Issues and Events of things; yet, if by frequent *Acts* of Trust and Reliance on him, we have so dispos'd our Minds to confide in him, as that by looking up to his over-ruling *Providence*, we can ordinarily stay and support our selves amidst the Changes and Revolutions of this World: If when a Storm of Adversity hangs lowring over, or show'rs down upon us, we can fly to God for Shelter, and

and promise our selves Safety and Protection under the outstretch'd Wing of his Providence: In a Word, if when we smart, we can ordinarily hope in him, and rest persuaded that under his gracious Conduct and Disposal all things shall work together for our Good; this our imperfect wavering Hope and Dependence shall, in the other Life, be immediately ripen'd into a most perfect *Confidence* and *Assurance*. For tho' our Condition will be ever dependent, yet will it be ever dependent upon such a Foundation as can no more fail than God's own Life and Being; no less than his Veracity and Goodness, both which are so essential to him, as that he cannot exist without them. And knowing our selves so firmly secur'd in this our dependent State, as that we can never sink, unless God himself sink under us, we shall be to all Eternity, not only as safe but as satisfy'd in it as if we were every one a God to himself; and in this blessed Security we shall quietly enjoy God and our selves for ever. Thus will our *Trust* and *Confidence* in him crown the Pleasure of all our other Virtues, by giving us full Security of an everlasting Fruition. The ravish'd Mind will now have no *Fear* or *Distrust* to cramp or arrest it in its blessed Operations, no anxious Thoughts of a sad insecurity to sour its present Enjoyments,
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but will enjoy all Heaven every Moment, in a fearless Security of enjoying it all for ever; and when it shall perfectly *love, contemplate, and adore* God with a sure and certain Confidence of *contemplating*, loving, and adoring him perfectly for ever, oh how unspeakably will this enhance the Pleasure of those beatifical Acts! For now, in every Moment of our blessed Eternity, we shall still have the Joy of a blessed Eternity to come. And besides all those Pleasures which each present Moment of our heavenly Life shall abound with, we shall still have the Pleasure of a Prospect of infinite Ages of Pleasure. And thus the blessed Mind, by its perfect dependence on God, consummates its own Heaven, and secures itself for ever in a most quiet and undisturb'd Enjoyment.

The Delight which a good Christian cannot but take in considering so nearly the Perfection of his Life and Happiness, both in this World and the next, will take away the Tedioufness of Reflections too apt to disgust worldly Minds that bend always to this Earth, and have not Spirit enough to soar ever so little up towards Heaven. To these they are not address'd; but even for these too one must have some Consideration; and in treating in the next Place of the *social Virtues*, they may, I hope, be led.

led to consider the *divine* with less Impatience.

Man, of all sublunary Creatures, is most adapted to *Society*; for tho' the greatest part of other Creatures do covet Society as well as he, yet he alone is furnish'd with that Gift of Nature which renders Society the most pleasant and useful, and that is the Gift of *Speech*: By means of which we can express our Thoughts, maintain a mutual Intelligence of Minds one; with another, and thereby divert our Sorrows, mingle our Mirth, impart our Secrets, communicate our Counsels, and make mutual Compacts and Agreements to supply and assist each other. And in these things consists the greatest Pleasure and Use of *Society*. As of all Creatures we are most fitted for Society, so we stand in the greatest need of it: For as for other Creatures, after they come into the World, they are much sooner able to help themselves than we; and after we are most able to help our selves, there are a World of Necessaries and Conveniencies, without which we cannot be happy, and with which we cannot be supply'd without each other's Aid and Assistance, which in an unsociable State of Life we shou'd, of all Creatures in the World, be the most indispos'd to render one another. As a Man in his perfect State is the best of all Animals,

mals, so separated from Law and Right he is the worst: For out of Society we see his Nature perfectly degenerates, and instead of being inclin'd to assist, grows always most savage and barbarous to his own Kind. Since therefore we have so much need of each other's Help, *Society* is absolutely necessary to cherish and preserve in us our natural Benevolence towards one another; without which, instead of being mutually helpful, we should be mutually mischievous. For he that cannot contract Society with others, or thro' his own Self-sufficiency does not need it, belongs not to any Commonwealth, but is either a wild Beast or a God. We being therefore so fram'd for *Society*, and under such Necessities of entring into it, it hence necessarily follows, that being associated together, we are all oblig'd in our several Ranks and Stations so to behave our selves towards one another, as is most for the common Good of all; and that since the Happiness of each particular Member of our *Society*, redounds from the Welfare of the whole, and is involv'd in it; we ought to esteem nothing good for *our selves* that is a Nuisance to the Publick, because whatever it suffers, I and every Man suffer; and unless I cou'd be happy alone, that can never be for my Interest in *particular* that is against my Interest in *common*. Now in
such

such a mutual Behaviour as most conduces to our common Benefit and Happiness, as we are in Society with one another, consists all *social Virtue*, the proper Use and Design of which is to preserve our *Society* with one another, and to render it a common Blessing.

As *rational* Creatures *associated*, and so related to one another, we are oblig'd to be *kindly and charitably dispos'd towards one another*: For the End of our *Society* being mutually to aid and assist one another, it is necessary in order thereunto, that we should every one be *kind* and *benevolent* to every one, that so we may be continually inclin'd mutually to aid, and to do good Offices to one another. So far as we fall short of this we fall short of the End of our *Society*. The less we *love* one another, the less prone we shall be to promote each other's Welfare, and consequently the less Advantage we shall reap from our mutual *Society*. But if instead of loving we malign and hate each other, our *Society* will be so far from contributing to our Happiness, that it will be only a means of rendring us more miserable. For 'twill only furnish us with more frequent Opportunities of doing Mischief to one another, and that mutual Intercourse we shall have by being united together in Society, will supply us with greater Means and Occasi-

ons to wreak our Spight upon each other. For *Society* puts us within each other's Reach, and by that Means, if we are Enemies, renders us more dangerous to one another; like two adverse Armies, which when they are at a Distance can do but little Hurt, but when they are join'd and mingled, never want Opportunities to destroy and butcher one another. Thus *Hatred* and *Malice* render our *Society* a *Plague*, and we had much better live *apart* poorly and solitarily, and withdraw from one another as Beasts of Prey do, into their separate Dens, than continue in one another's Reach, and be always liable, as we must be while we are in *Society*, to be *baited* and *worried* by one another.

And as *Hatred* and *Malice* spoil all our *Society* in this Life, and render it worse than the most dismal Solitude, so they will also in the other; for whenever the Souls of Men leave their Bodies, they doubtless flock to the Birds of their own Feather, and consort themselves with such separate Spirits as are of their own Genius and Temper. For besides that good and bad Spirits are by the eternal Laws of the other World distributed into two separate Nations, and there live *apart* from one another, having no other Communication or Intercourse but what is between two hostile Countries, that are
conti-

continually designing and attempting one against another: Besides this, I say, Likeness does naturally congregate Beings, and incline them to associate with their own Kind. Now *Rancour* and *Malice* are the proper Characters of the Devil, and the natural Genius of Hell, and consequently 'tis by a malicious Temper of Mind that we are naturaliz'd beforehand Subjects of the Kingdom of Darkness, and qualify'd for the Conversation of Furies. And when we go from hence into Eternity, this our malignant Genius will render us utterly averse to the friendly Society of Heaven, and naturally press and incline us to consort with that wretched Nation of spiteful and rancorous Spirits, with whom we are already join'd by a *Likeness* and Communion of Nature. But oh! much better were it for us to be shut up all alone in some dark Hole of the World, where we might converse only with our own melancholly Thoughts, and never hear of any other Being but our selves, than to be continually plac'd with such vexatious Company. For tho' we who are Spectators only of *corporeal* Action, cannot discern the manner how one Spirit acts upon another, yet there is no doubt but *spiritual Agents* can strike as immediately upon Spirits as *bodily Agents* can upon Bodies; and supposing that these can mutually act upon one another, there

there is no more doubt but that they can mutually make each other feel each other's *Pleasures* and *Displeasures*, and that according as they are more or less powerful, they can more or less aggrieve and afflict one another. And what can be expected from a Company of malicious spiteful Spirits, join'd in *Society* together, but that their Conversation should be a continual Intercourse of mutual Mischiefs and Vexations? Especially considering how they have laid the Foundation of an eternal Quarrel one against another. For there all those Companions in Sin will meet, who by their ill Counsels, wicked Imaginations, and sad Examples, did mutually contribute to each others Ruin; and being met in such a woful State, how will the tormenting Sense of those irreparable Injuries they have done each other, whet their Fury against, and incite them to play the Devils one with another? And what can be expected from such a Company of *waspyish* Beings, so implacably incens'd against one another, but that being shut up together in the infernal Den, they shou'd be perpetually hissing at and stinging each other? And besides these mutual Plagues, which these furious Spirits must be suppos'd to inflict upon one another, they will be also nakedly exposed to the powerful Malice of the Devils, those fierce Executioners of
God's

God's righteous Vengeance; who, as we now find by Experience, have Power to suggest black and horrid Thoughts to us, and to torture our Souls with such dreadful Imaginations, as are far more sharp and exquisite than any bodily Torments. And since they have such Power over us, when God thinks fit to let them loose, what will they have hereafter, when our wretched Spirits shall be wholly abandon'd to their Will, and they shall have free Scope to exercise their Fury upon us, and glut their Hungry Malice with our Griefs and Vexations? It seems, at least, a mighty probable Notion, that that horrid Agony of our Saviour in the Garden, which caus'd him to shriek and groan, and sweat as it were great Drops of Blood, was chiefly the Effect of those preternatural Terrors which the Devils, with whom he was then contesting, imprest upon his innocent Mind. And if they had so much Power over his pure and mighty Soul, that was so strongly guarded with the most perfect and unspotted Virtues, what will they have over ours, when we are abandon'd to them, and thrown as *Preys* into their Mouths? With what a hellish Rage will they fly upon our guilty and timorous Souls, in which there is so much Tinder for their injected Sparks of Horror to take Fire on?

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Since therefore *Rancour* and *Malice* do so naturally incline and hurry our Souls towards the wretched Society of Devils and damned Spirits, the *Gospel* which so industriously consults our Happiness, takes all possible Care, as has been before observ'd, to train us up in Charity and mutual Love: it obliges us to bear an universal *good Will* to all, and to take an hearty Complacency in all that are truly lovely; to be ready to contribute to, and rejoice in every ones Welfare, and to live in the continual Exercise of all those *charitable* Offices which have been enlarg'd up or in treating of the Virtue of *Charity*: To be courteous and affable, and to treat all those we converse with, with an obliging Look, a gentle Deportment, and endearing Language: To be *long suffering, mild, and easie to be intreated*, not to break forth into Rage and Storm upon every Provocation; and when we are justly provok'd, not to suffer our Displeasure to fester into Malice and Rancour, but to be forward and easie to be reconcil'd: To be of a *compassionate* and *sympathizing* Temper, and to *rejoice* with those that *rejoice*, and *weep* with those that *weep*, to be candid Interpreters of Men and their Actions, to be ready to mitigate and excuse their Faults, and put fair Comments on their Actions, to be so far from making malicious Glosses on their innocent Meaning from
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proclaiming their Miscarriages, and rejoicing in their Falls, as not to believe ill of them, but upon undeniable Evidence; and when we are forc'd to do so, to pity and lament them, and endeavour, and pray, and hope for their Reformation. In short, to be benign and bountiful to the Necessitous and Distress'd, and to endeavour, according to our Abilities, to allay their Sorrows, remove their Oppressions, support them under their Calamities, and counsel them in their Doubts; to be ready to every good Work, and like Fields of Spices, to be scattering our Perfumes thro' all the Neighbourhood; and all this out of an honest sincere Purpose to promote their Good, and not merely to acquire to our selves a popular Vogue and Reputation: All which are essential Parts of that *Charity*, which the Gospel enjoins us to exercise towards one another, of which enough has been said in the first Volume under its proper Head.

As we are rational Creatures related to one another, *we are oblig'd to be just and righteous in all our intercourse with one another*; to yield to every one whatsoever by any kind of Right, whether natural or acquir'd, he can demand or challenge of us; for there are some things to which every Man has a Right by Nature, as he is a Part and Member of human Society. As for Instance,

Life,

Life, which is the principal of all our Actions and Perceptions, is freely lent us by God, who is the Source and Fountain of *Life*, and consequently 'till God resumes his *Loan*, or we forfeit it by our own Actions, we have all a natural Right to live; and for any Man to attempt to deprive us of our *Life*, or our means of living, is the highest Injury and Injustice. Again, *Words* being instituted for no other end but to signify our Meaning, and to be the Instrument of our Intercourse and *Society* with one another, every one who is a Member of human *Society*, has a Right to have our Meaning truly signify'd to him by our Words; and whosoever lies or equivocates to another, does injuriously deprive him of the natural Right of *Society*. Again, a *good Name* being the Ground of Trust and Credit, and Credit the main Sinew of *Society*, 'till Men have forfeited their good Name, they have a natural Right to be well reputed and *spoken of*, and whoever, either by *false Witness*, *publick Slander*, or *private Whisperings*, endeavours to attain an innocent Man's Reputation, does thereby injuriously attempt to exclude him from the Conversation of Men, and shut the Door of human Society against him. Once more, Promises being the great Security of our mutual Intercourse and *Society* with one another, every Man that has

a Right to Society, has a Right to what another *promises* him, provided it be lawful and possible; and therefore to promise what he intends not to perform, or to go back from his *Promise* when he lawfully may and can perform it, is an Act of unjust Rapine; and I may every whit as honestly rob another *Man* of what is his without my *Promise*, as of what I have made his by it, he having an equal Right to both, by fundamental Laws of *Society*. In fine, the great Design of our Society, being to help and assist one another; every Man has a Right to be aided and assisted by every one with whom he has any Dealing or Intercourse, to have some Share of the Benefit of all that Exchange, Traffick, and Commerce, which passes between him and others; and therefore for any Man in his Dealings with others, to take Advantage from their Necessity or Ignorance, to oppress or over-reach them, or to deal so hardly by them, as either not to allow them any Share of the Profit which accrues from their Dealings, or not a sufficient Share for them to subsist and live by, is an injurious Perversion of that natural Right, which the very End and Design of Society gives them: But then besides these *natural*, there are also acquired *Rights*, and such are those, which either by legal Constitution, or by mutual *Compacts* and

and *Agreements*, we are stor'd and vested with; which *Constitutions* and *Compacts*, being absolutely necessary to the upholding and regulating of Human Societies, it is no less necessary that all those Rights which they confer, shou'd be inviolably preserv'd; and whoever knowingly or wilfully takes away, or detains from another, what he is thus entitled to by Law or Agreement, is guilty either of a *Fraud* or *Robbery*, either of which is an unjust Violation of the Rights of human *Society*.

The Practice of *Justice* and *Righteousness*, as it is confin'd to human *Society*, consists therefore in not intrenching either upon the natural or acquir'd Rights of those with whom we have any Dealing or Intercourse; in not endeavouring to deprive them either of their *Lives* or *Livelihoods*, unless by their own Actions they forfeit them to us, in imparting our true meaning to them by our Words, and neither hiding it under *Lyes* and *Falshoods*, nor disguising it with equivocal *Reservations*, in making good to them all our lawful and possible *Promises*, in not *falsly* aspersing their good *Names* and *Reputation*, nor suffering them to be *falsly* aspers'd, when we are able to vindicate them, in neither using them cruelly in our Dealings, so as wilfully to damnify them, nor so hardly as either to take all the Advantage to our
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selves,

selves, or not to allow them such a competent Share of it, as is necessary to support and maintain them. In a word, not to defraud or rob them of any thing, which either by Constitution of Law, or by Compact and Agreement, they have a Right to. This is civil Righteousness, and without it 'tis impossible that any *Society* shou'd be happy; for how can any one be secure in a *Society* where Violence and Rapine, Falshood and Oppression reign; where Causes are decided not by Rules of Justice, but by dint of Power, and the strongest Arm is the sole Arbitrator of *right* and *wrong*; where *Promises* and *Professions* are only *Traps* and *Snàres*, and every Man lays *Ambushes* in his *Words*, and lurks behind them in reserv'd Meanings, only to wait an Opportunity to surprize and ruin every one he converses with? It wou'd doubtless be far more eligible for Men to disperse and disband their *Society*, and live apart as *Vermin* do, and subsist by robbing and filching from one another, than to live together (as they must in such a State of Injustice) like Bundles of *Briars* and *Thorns*, and out of their mutual Jealousies and Distrusts, be continually tearing and scratching one another.

If we go out of this World with an unrighteous Temper, we must expect to be confin'd in the other to an unrighteous *Society*;

ciety; and if *Unrighteousness* be such a Nuisance to our *Society* in this Life, what a Plague will it be to it in the Life to come? For the most barbarous Societies of Men in this *Life*, have some Remains of Justice and Equity among them; and tho' the best of them have many corrupt Members that are bad in the main, yet whether it be by their natural Temper, or their fear of Punishment or Disgrace, or by their Sense of Honour or Checks of Conscience, they are frequently restrain'd from many bad things, particularly from *Dishonesty* and *Injustice*, by which means their Society is render'd much more tolerable. But in the other Life, as they are all perfectly good that are in the *Society* of the Good, so they are all wicked that are in the *Society* of the Wicked; and whatever Checks there may be in their Natures, to any particular Acts of Wickedness, they are all born down by their inveterate Malice against God, and outrageous Despair of ever being reconcil'd to him. This is all their *Society* with one another, there is not the least intermixture of just and righteous Intercourses, but all their Conversation is Falshood and Treachery, Violence and Oppression, and whatever else is hurtful and injurious to one another: For the Devil, who is the Sovereign *Prince* of their *Society*, is describ'd in Scripture to be the *Father of Lyes, and a Murtherer from the beginning,*

ginning, and doubtless the miserable Vassals of his dark Kingdom, do all imitate his Manners, and tread in his Footsteps. That we may not have our Portion among them, it is a great part of the Business of our *Holy Religion*, to train us up for better Company, by inuring us to the Practice of *Righteousness* and *Justice*; for so it obliges us to *do unto Men whatsoever we would that Men should do unto us*; to be *harmless as Doves*, and *wise as Serpents*, to *converse in the World with Simplicity and godly Sincerity*, to *keep up an honest Conversation in the World*; *not to lie to one another*, *not to go beyond or defraud our Brother in any Matter*. These are Obligations laid upon us by the Gospel, that we maintain a strict *Integrity* in all our Professions and Intercourses with Men, and not to allow ourselves in any course of Action, which the Laws of Justice and Sincerity disapprove; to measure our Words by our Meaning, and our Meaning, so far as we are able, by the truth and reality of things; to converse among Men with a generous Openness and Freedom, and with as little Reserve and Disguise as is possible and prudent, considering what a treacherous and ill-natur'd World we have to deal with; to be what we seem, and not to paint ill Meaning with smiling Looks and smooth Pretences: to notify our Intentions, and unfold our Hearts; and so far

as innocent Prudence will admit, to turn our selves inside outwards to all we converse with; to give to every one his Due, and not to trench upon other Mens Rights, whether it be to their Lives or Liberties, Reputations or Estates: In a word, to weigh to our Neighbours and our selves in the same Balance, and to do to them whatever we cou'd reasonably wish they shou'd do to us, if we were in their Persons and Circumstances. By the Practice of which excellent Rules, our Minds will, by degrees, be refin'd and purify'd from all Disposition to Fraud and Injustice; and then when we go from hence into *Eternity*, we shall carry thither with us such a just and righteous frame of Mind, such an honest plainness and integrity of Temper, as will immediately qualifie and dispose us for the Society of just Men made perfect, who finding us already united to them in Disposition and Nature, will joyfully receive us into their blessed Communion.

Oh the blessed State we shall be in, when being stript of all Partiality and unjust Desire, of all *insincerity* and *craftiness* of Temper, we shall be admitted into a Nation of just and righteous People, where every one has his appropriate Seat, and fullness of Glory, and is so perfectly contented with it, that he never covets what another enjoys! Thus every one possesses what is his own,

without the least Suspicion of being ejected by a subtler, or more powerful Neighbour; where being perfectly assur'd of each others Integrity, they converse together with the greatest Openness and Freedom, and in all their Language, whatever it be, they read their Hearts, and convey their Intentions to one another; their Souls converse Face to Face, and they freely unbosom themselves to one another, without the least *Disguise* or *Disimulation*; there is no such thing in all their *Society* as a *Mystery* or *Secret*, they are all Friends to one another, and every one has a Window in every ones Breast. Oh blessed God! what a most happy Conversation must such Souls as these enjoy with one another, from whose *Society* all *Fraud* and *Falseness*, *Violence* and *Oppression* is for ever banish'd! For while they live together as they do, in the continual Exercise of perfect *Righteousness* and *Integrity*, they can neither design upon, nor suspect one another, and so consequently must needs converse together with infinite Security and Freedom; and being all of them thus inviolably safe in each others *Sincerity* and *Justice*, every one enjoys his proper Rank and Degree of Glory, without Fear or Disturbance, and freely communicates his wise and excellent Thoughts to every one, without any Strangeness and Reserve. Thus all Heaven over, there is a
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most perfect Freedom of Conversation among these righteous People that inhabit it, and every one is every ones Neighbour, and every ones Neighbour is as himself; for in all their Communication and Intercourse, they mutually exchange Persons with one another, and there is no one that does that to another, which he wou'd not gladly have done to himself in the same Condition and Circumstances; none of them all can possibly be aggriev'd, because they are every one dealt by, just as they wou'd be, most fairly, most righteously, and faithfully: And hence there can be no Grudgings among them, as *Whisperings*, *Backbitings*, or spiteful *Misrepresentations*, because every one likes what every one does, and so they are perfectly satisfy'd with one another: And thus we see, that in the Exercise of perfect Righteousness and Integrity, all the Society of Heaven is render'd perfectly happy.

As we are rational Creatures, related to one another, *we are oblig'd to behave our selves peaceably in our respective States and Relations*; for *Society* being nothing but an *united* Multitude, it is indispensably necessary for the Preservation of its *Union*, that every individual Member of it shou'd peaceably comport himself towards every one in that Degree and Order in which he is placed; because, as the *Health* of natural Bodies depends upon

the Harmony and Agreement of their Parts, so does the Prosperity of *Societies* on political ones; for 'tis *Peace* and mutual *Accord*, which is the Soul that animates and unites *Society*, and keeps the Parts of it from dispersing and flying abroad into *Atoms*, which nothing but Force and Violence can hinder them from, when once they are broken into Discords and Dissensions; so true is that of our Saviour, *A Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*; for besides that Division impairs the Strength of a *Society*, which like an impetuous Stream, being parted into several Currents, runs with far less Force, and is much more easily fordable; besides this, I say, *Faction* and *Discord* naturally disunite and separate *Society*, as they dissolve the Bonds of Peace which hold it together; for a *Society*, without Peace, is but an aggregated Body, whose Parts lie together in a confus'd Heap, but have no Joints or Sinews to fasten them to one another; for want of which, instead of mutually assisting, they do but mutually load and oppress each other, which must necessarily divide their Wills and their Interests; and when that is done, 'tis only external Force, that hinders them from dividing and separating their Persons. Upon this account therefore, every Man is oblig'd, as he is a Member of *human Society*, to comport himself peaceably with all Men;

Men; because otherwise he will necessarily render himself a publick Pest and Nuisance. For so long as he's of an unquiet and turbulent Spirit, instead of being an Help, he must necessarily be a Disease to every Community of which he is a Member; and if those with whom he is join'd were all of his Humour and Spirit, it wou'd be much better for them all to live asunder in the most solitary Condition, than continue in Society together; because instead of helping and assisting, they wou'd be sure to be continually vexing and plaguing one another.

How many sad Instances have we in these distracted Times, of the Mischiefs done by Children of Faction and Discord? What Havock have they made with the Reputation of the most Worthy? How have they set Neighbour against Neighbour, Friend against Friend, and ruin'd all that Strength which depended on the united Hearts of good *Protestants* and good *Englishmen*?

If any of us shou'd go into the other World with an *unquiet* and *quarrelsome* Temper, we shall be thereby inclin'd to, and prepar'd for, the most wretched and miserable *Society*, even the *Society* of those *factionous* Fiends, that cou'd not be quiet in Heaven itself but rais'd a Mutiny before the Throne of God, and for so doing were driven thence, and damn'd to keep one another Company in
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endless Misery and Despair. The Souls of Men therefore, being by the Laws of the invisible State always assign'd to that Society of Spirits to which they are most con-naturaliz'd in their Temper, we must expect, if we go into Eternity with turbulent and contentious Minds, to be thrust into the Society of Devils and damn'd *Ghosts*, with whom we are already joyn'd in a strict Communion of Natures. The most horrid and frightful Idea I can form in my Mind of such wretched Company is, that of an infinite Multitude of snarling and quarrellsome Spirits, crowded like so many *Scorpions* and *Adders* in a *Den* together, and there forc'd, by the Venom of their Temper, to live in continual Mutiny, and be perpetually *bis-sing* and spitting Poyson at one another.

Wherefore since to be united by indissoluble Ligaments to such miserable Company, will be the certain Fate of all *Faction*, and contentious Souls, Enemies of *true Peace*, *Union* and *Concord*, our Blessed Religion, whose great Design is to advance our Happiness, has taken abundant Care to educate our Minds in *Quietness* and *Peace*. For hither tend all those Precepts of it, which require us to *follow Peace with all Men*, to be *at peace among our selves*, to *follow after the things that make for Peace*, to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, to be of

one Mind, and to live in Peace; and if it be possible to live peaceably with all Men. These are the Lessons taught us in the Holy Scriptures. How they are practis'd by those that foment our Divisions, fill the World with Scandal and Calumny, and at the Expence of Truth and Charity, nay even of common Sense and common Honesty, enflame the Minds of Christians and Protestants, with unnatural Heats and fatal Animosities, let every Christian Reader judge. We are restrain'd by the strictest Obligations in Holy Writ, from all factious and turbulent Behaviour, from a Spirit of Discord and Persecution; and to demean our selves in those sacred or civil Societies, of which we are Members, with all Gentleness and Moderation. And unless we do sincerely endeavour to fulfil these Obligations, however we may monopolize Godliness to our own Party, and *claw* and *canonize* one another, we are *Saints* of a quite different Strain from those blessed ones above, and are acted by the factious Spirit of the Devil, whose Business it is to kindle Disturbances and Commotions where-ever he comes. This therefore must be our great Care if we design for Heaven, to root out of our Tempers all Inclination to *Contention* and *Discord*, and to compose our selves into a *sedate* and *peaceable*, *calm* and *gentle* Frame of Spirit; and not only to
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avoid all unnecessary *Quarrels* and *Contentions* our selves, but so far as in us lies, to be *Peacemakers* between others, and to preserve a friendly *Union* with, and among our *Fellow-Members*. And if through humane *Frailty* and *Infirmity*, through our own Ignorance of the plausible *Pretences* of *Seducers*, through the too great Prevalence of our *worldly Interest*, or the Principles of a *bad Education*, it shou'd be our Misfortune to be insensibly misled into unwarrantable *Dissents* and *Divisions*, yet still to keep our Minds in a teachable Temper, and our Ears open to *Truth* and *Conviction*, to be desirous of *Accommodation*, to be willing to hear the Reasons on both sides; and as soon as we are convinc'd of our *Error*, to repent of our *Division*, and immediately to return to *Unity* and *Peace*.

Which if it be our constant Practice and Endeavour, we shall by degrees form our Minds into such a peaceable and amicable Temper, that when we go into the other World, where we shall be perfectly disengag'd from all temporal Interests, and thoroughly convinc'd of all our erroneous Prejudices, our Souls will be effectually counterpois'd with the quiet and peaceable *Society* of the Blessed, who having no private Interests to pursue, no particular Affections to gratifie, no Ends or Aims but what are
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common to them all, which is to *adore*, and *imitate*, and *love*, that never-failing Spring whence all their Felicity flows; it is impossible there shou'd be any Occasion administer'd by any of them, of any Rupture of Communion. If we wou'd live for ever with these blessed Spirits, we must now endeavour to calm and compose our selves with their Temper, to discharge our Minds, as much as we are able, of every froward and contentious Humour, and reduce our Wills to a perfect loathing of them; that so being qualify'd for their Society, we may be admitted to it when we go away from this wrangling World. All their Communion is a perfect *Concord* of Souls, wherein there is no such thing as *Division*, passing cruel Censures, affixing *hard Names*, or bandying *Anathemas* at one another; but in Mind and Heart they are all as perfectly *one*, as if they were all animated by one and the same Soul. And thus they live unspeakably happy, in the mutual Exercise of an everlasting Peace, and all their Conversation with one another, is perfect *Harmony* without *Discord*.

As we are *rational Creatures* related to one another, we are oblig'd modestly to submit to our *Superiors*, and chearfully to condescend to our *Inferiors*, in those respective *Societies* of which we are *Members*. It being

ing necessary to the Order and End of all *Societies*, that their Members shou'd be distinguished into *superior* and *inferior* Ranks and Stations; that some shou'd be trusted with the Power of *Commanding*, and others reduc'd to the Condition of *Obedience*; that so in this regular *Subordination*, they may every one in their several Stations be oblig'd to, and assist each other, and according to their several Capacities to contribute to the *Good* of the *whole*, which in a *State of Equality*, wherein every Man wou'd be absolute Lord of himself, cannot be expected, considering the differing Humours and Interests by which Men are acted. This, I say, being upon this account necessary, it is upon the same account equally necessary, that they should mutually perform those Offices to one another, which are proper to their respective Ranks and Stations, and are indeed the Foundations and Conditions of their Inequality. *Superiors* shou'd look upon themselves as Trustees for the *publick Good*, whom God has invested with Authority over others; not to *domineer* and gratifie their own *imperious* Wills, but to provide for, and secure the *Common-wealth*, and consequently to take care that they do not prostitute their *Power* to their own private *Avarice* and *Ambition*, but that they employ it for the *common Good* and Benefit of their *Subjects*

jects and *Inferiors*; that they be ready to do them all good Offices, to compassionate their *Infirmities*, consult their Conveniencies, and comply with all their reasonable Supplications; considering that for this End they deriv'd their Authority from God, who is the Fountain of Authority, and will strictly call them to account for their good and bad Administration. And so for the *Inferiors*, 'tis no less necessary for the *common Good*, that they perform their Parts towards those that are above them; that they behave themselves towards them with all that *Loyalty* and *Modesty*, *Respect* and *Submission*, which their Place and Authority call for; that they reverence them in the *legal Exercise* of their Offices, as the *Vicegerents* of God, and address to them as to sacred Persons, rend'ring a chearful Obedience to that divine Authority which is stamp'd upon all their *just* Laws and Commands; considering, that in their several Degrees they represent the Person of the great Sovereign of the World, to whom we owe an entire *Subjection*, and consequently are to be *obey'd* and *submitted* to, in every thing that he has not expressly countermanded. And that *Subjects* and *Superiors* shou'd thus behave themselves towards one another, is indispensably necessary to the Welfare of all *Societies*; for while the *Inferiors* of any *Society* do obstinately refuse to submit

submit to the just Commands of their *Superiors*, and the *Superiors* to condescend to the *common Good* of their *Inferiors*, they are contending together, either for a *Confusion* or a *Tyranny*. If the *Superiors* prevail, *Tyranny* follows; if the *Inferiors*, *Confusion*; either of which is extremely mischievous, not only to the *Society* in general, but to each of the contending Parties: For if *Confusion* follows, 'tis not only the *superior* Party suffers, by being depos'd from his Authority, which is always to be consider'd as given him for the *common Good*, but the *Inferior* too, by being depriv'd of *Protection*, and expos'd to one another's *Rapine* and *Violence*. If *Tyranny* follows, 'tis not only the *inferior* Party suffers, by being forc'd to a rigorous and uneasy Obedience, but the *Superior* too, by being continually perplex'd how to force and extort that Obedience. Thus both Parties suffer under the bad Effects of each others Misdemeanour. To make our Society happy it is necessary, that whether we be *Superiors* or *Inferiors*, we shou'd be of a *gentle, easie, and tractable* Spirit; that so which Rank soever we are plac'd in, we may be pliable either way to a *fair* Condescension, or a *just* Submission. For while we are of obstinate, perverse, untractable *Tempers*, we are neither fit to be *Superiors* nor *Inferiors*, but must necessarily be

Plagues

Plagues and Grievances to our *Society*, which Rank or Order soever we are plac'd in. And tho' in this Life we have not always such a sensible Experience of the Evil and Mischief of this malignant Temper, because now it is counter-influenc'd by those more *meek* and *auspicious* ones, that are in conjunction with it: Yet when we go into *Eternity*, we shall be confin'd to such a *Society* of Spirits, as are all throughout of our own Genius and Temper. For as in the Society of the Blessed, there is a Conjunction of every *Virtue* in every Member, so there is of every *Vice* in the Society of the Wicked; who do not only retain those Vices in their Natures, which they were here inclin'd and addicted to, but are also continually excited to all other Vices they are capable of, by their inveterate Enmity against God; which in that miserable Estate is perpetually enrag'd, by their Despair of being ever reconcil'd to him. Thus whatever wicked Temper we carry with us into Eternity, we shall be sure to meet with it in every individual Member of the Society of the Wicked; and consequently if we carry thither with us a perverse and untractable Temper, that will not endure either to *submit* or condescend, we shall be sure to find the same Humour reigning throughout all the Society of the Wicked; and then being eternally united to it, as we must

must expect to be, if we are call'd to it by Nature; in what a wretched State shall we be, when every Member of our *Society* shall be of the same unconvertible Temper with our selves, and we shall find none that will comply with, or endeavour to sooth and mollifie our Obstinacy? when all our whole *Society* shall consist of a Company of stiff and stubborn Spirits, that will neither submit to, nor bear with one another, but every one will have his Will upon every one, so far as he is able to force and extort it? when those that are *superior* in Might and Power, do all rule with a fierce and tyrannical Will, and will condescend to nothing that is beneficial for their *Subjects*; and those that are *inferior*, do obey with a *perverse* and *stubborn* Heart, and will *submit* to nothing but what they are forc'd and compell'd to? In a Word, when they all mutually hate and abominate each other, and those that command are a Company of *cruel* and *imperious* Devils, that impose nothing but *Grievances* and *Plagues*; and those that *obey* are a Company of surly untractable Slaves, that *submit* to nothing but what they are driven to by *Plagues*; and thus *Plagues* and *Grievances* are both the Matter and the Motion of all their *Obedience* and *Subjection*. Those that *compel* are like so many savage Tyrants, continually vex'd and enrag'd with
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stubborn Oppositions and Resistances; and those that are *compell'd*, like so many obstinate Gally Slaves, are continually lash'd into an *insufferable* Obedience, and *forc'd* by one Torment to *submit* to another.

This being therefore the miserable State and Issue of a *perverse*, *stubborn*, and *untractable* Temper, the Gospel, whose great Design it is to direct us to our Happiness, does industriously endeavour to root it out of our Minds, and so plant in its room a *gentle*, *obsequious* and *condescending* Disposition. For thither tend all those Evangelical Precepts, which require us, *to become weak to the Weak*, *that we may gain them*, *to bear with their Infirmities*, *to support them and be patient towards them*, *to submit our selves to our Elders*, *and to those that have Rule over us*; *to obey our Magistrates*, *our Parents and our Masters*; *to be subject to Principalities*, *not to speak evil of Dignities*, *to honour all Men as they deserve*, *to hold good Men in Reputation*, *and in Honour to prefer one another*: The Sense of all which is, *to oblige us to treat all Men as becomes us*, in the Rank and Station we are plac'd in; *to honour those that are Superiors*, whether in Place or Virtue; *to give that modest Deference to their Judgments*, *that Reverence to their Persons*, *that Respect to their Virtues*, and *Homage to their Desires or Commands*, which the De-

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gree or *Kind* of their *Superiority* requires ; to *condescend* to those that are *Inferior*, and treat them with all that *Candour* and *Ingenuity*, *Sweetness* and *Affability*, that the respective *Distances* of our *State* will allow ; to consult their *Conveniences*, to do them all good *Offices*, and *pity* and *bear* with their *Infirmities*, so far as is safely and wisely tolerable. By the constant Practice of which our Minds will be gradually cur'd of all that *Perverseness* and *Surlinefs* of Temper, which indispose us to the respective Duties of our Relations ; of all that *Contempt* and *Selfishness*, which renders us averse to the proper Duties of Superiors ; and of all that *Self-conceit* and *Impatience* of Command, which indispose us to the Duty of *Inferiors*. And our Wills being once wrought into an easie Pliableness, either to Submission or Condescension, we are in a forward Preparation of Mind, to live under the Government of Heaven ; where doubtless, under God, the supreme Lord and Sovereign, there are numberless Degrees of *Superiority* and *Inferiority*. Some are said to reap *sparingly*, some *abundantly* ; some to be *Rulers* of five Cities, some of ten ; some to be the *least*, and some to be the *greatest* in the Kingdom of Heaven : All which implies, that in that blessed State, there is a great Variety of Degrees of Glory and Advancement : And indeed it cannot

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not be otherwise in the Nature of the thing; for our Happiness consisting in the Perfection of our Natures, the more or less Perfect we are, the more or less Happy we must necessarily be; for every farther Degree of Goodness we attain to, is a widening and Enlargement of our Souls for farther Degrees of Glory and Beatitude: And accordingly, when we arrive at *Heaven*, which is the Element of Beatitude, we shall all be fill'd according to the Content and Measure of our Capacities; and drink in more or less of its Rivers of Pleasure, as we are more or less enlarg'd to contain them. But tho' in the Kingdom of Heaven, as well as in the Kingdoms of the Earth, there are numberless Degrees of Advancement and Dignity; and one *Star* there, as well as here, differs from another *Star* in Glory; yet so *freely* and chearfully do all they condescend and submit to one another, in these their respective Differences of Rank and Station, that in the widest Distances of their State and Degrees of Glory, they all maintain the dearest Intimacies and Familiarities with each other; and neither those that are Superior, are either envy'd for their Height, or contemn'd for their Familiarity; nor these that are Inferior, despis'd for their Meanness, or oppress'd for their Meekness.

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For in that blessed State, every one being best pleas'd with what best becomes him, it is every ones Joy to behave himself towards every one as best becomes the Rank and Station he is plac'd in; and those that are *above* do glory in condescending to those that are *below* them; and those that are *below* do triumph in submitting to those that are *above* them. Thus, in all those Differences of Glory and Dignity between them, they alternately reverence their Superiors, and condescend to their Inferiors, with the same unforc'd Freedom and Alacrity; and so do eternally converse with one another, notwithstanding all their Differences, with the greatest Freedom, and most endearing Familiarity.

And now, having largely shewn that the Practice of all divine and social Virtues in this Life, tends directly towards the Heavenly State, and naturally grows up to it, I'll use a few Persuasions to press Men to practise them.

Let us in the first Place consider the *Suitableness* of these *Virtues* to our present *State* and *Relation*. In our Baptism, wherein we gave up our Names to Christ, we became *Denizens* and *Freemen* of Heaven; and were receiv'd into a Covenant, that upon Performance of our Part of it, actually entitl'd us to all its blessed Privileges and Immunities;

ties; insomuch, that as *Fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God*, we are Confederates with them in the same Covenant, by which they hold all the Joys and Glories they are possess'd of; and if we will do as they have done, perform the Conditions of it, we shall be Co-habitants with them in the same Glory. We are adopted Children of the same Father with them, Members of the same Family, and Co-heirs of the Promises of the same Glory; and all the Difference between them and us is only this, that we are abroad, and they are at home; we are journeying toward, and they are in Possession of the heavenly *Canaan*, to which we are entitl'd as well as they, and that by the same Grant from the supreme Proprietor. And what can be more suitable to our Christian Profession, than for us to live, as the Saints in Heaven live, in the continual Practice of all these heavenly Virtues? What a Shame will it be for us, that are their profess'd Brethren, not to copy and imitate their Behaviour? That we, who are below Stairs in the same House and Family, shou'd abandon our selves to *Sensuality* and *Devilishness*, while our blessed Kindred above, are entertaining themselves with those heavenly Pleasures, which result from the perfect Exercise of all heavenly Virtue? That we shou'd

be neglecting, provoking, and blaspheming God, while they are *contemplating* and *admiring*, *loving* and *praising*, *imitating* and *obeying* him; that we shou'd be *cheating* and *defrauding*, *envying* and *despising*, *maligning* and *embroyling* one another; while they are conversing together with the *greatest Freedom* and *Integrity*, with the most obliging *Respects* and *Condescensions*, and in the strictest *Unity* and dearest *Friendship*. 'Tis really a burning Shame, that we shou'd profess our selves Fellow Citizens with them, for no other purpose but to scandalize and reproach them; and it were heartily to be wish'd, even for the Credit of Heaven, and our blessed Brethren that inhabit it, that if we will not be so generous as to follow their Example, we wou'd at least be so honest as to renounce their *Kindred*, and not claim a Relation to their Family, merely to shame and disgrace them.

Let us also consider the *Honour* and *Dignity* of the *heavenly Life*: For we may estimate Actions by the Examples from whence they are copy'd, as in other Cases we are wont to do; doubtless the most noble and honourable, are such as are copy'd from the Lives of the glorious Inhabitants of Heaven. Besides that sublime Rank of Dignity to which they are advanced, as being the *Courtiers*, and *immediate Attendants* of the

Almighty

Almighty Sovereign of Heaven and Earth; their *Examples* being the most perfect *Copies* and *Imitations* of the *Life of God*, are thereby render'd, not only more eminent and glorious, but also more obliging and authoritative: For by following them we follow God, who is the Standard of all rational Perfection; and who by being the *first* and *best* in the whole Kind of *rational Beings*, is the supreme *Rule* and *Measure* of them all. In imitating the blessed People above, we do what God himself wou'd do, were he in our Place; and what the Son of God himself did, when he was in our Nature; and there is no other Difference in his Life and ours, but what necessarily arises out of different States and Relations. And what more glorious thing can we do, than to live by the Pattern of their Lives, who live so exactly by the Pattern of God's? Their Example is an Imitation in kind of all those particular Excellencies in him, which they may and ought to imitate; and is an Imitation in general, of that eternal Decorum, with respect to Conditions and States, which he constantly observes in all his Transactions with his Creatures. And as their Example is a perfect Copy of God's, so 'tis a Copy, fitted in all Particulars, for our Use and Imitation: For it does not only describe to us all those particular Excellencies in him,

which are to be imitated by us, but all those particular Duties, to which that eternal Law of Equity and Goodness, by which he governs himself in his State, requires of us in ours; and shews, not only wherein we are to imitate him in kind, but also wherein we are to follow him in general, in doing what is most fit for us in the State and Relation of *Creatures*, even as he does what is most fit for him, in the State and Relation of a God and Creator. The Example of those heavenly Inhabitants is the Example of God himself, exactly fitted and attemper'd to the State and Condition of *Creatures*. For just as they live, the All-wise and All-good God himself wou'd live, if he *were* in their State and Relation. Wherefore by imitating their heavenly Lives and Manners, we do our selves the greatest Right, and do most effectually consult the Glory and Honour of our own Natures. For while we tread in theirs, we tread in the Footsteps of God, and have his glorious Example to warrant and justify our Actions, we behave our selves as it becomes the Children of the King of Heaven, and so far as it consists with the Condition of *Creatures*, we live like so many Gods in the World, which is doubtless the utmost Height of Honour and Glory, that any rational *Ambition* can aspire to.

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In the next Place, let us consider the great *Freedom* and *Liberty* of a religious Life. So long as we live earthly and sensual Lives, our free-born Souls are imprison'd in Sense, and all their Motions are circumscrib'd and bounded in this, the narrow Sphere of *sensitive* Goods and Enjoyments. When we wou'd follow our Reason, and do as that prescribes and dictates, we find our selves miserably hamper'd and entangl'd. The *Lusts* of our *Flesh* do hang, like Gyves, so heavily upon us, that when ever our Reason and Conscience call, we cannot move with any *Freedom*, but are fain to labour at every Step, and after a few faint Essays, are utterly tir'd under the Weight of our reluctant Inclinations. The Good which many times we wou'd do, we do not; the Law in our Minds being countervoted by the Law in our Members: Our Reason and Conscience tell us, that we ought to love God above all, to adore and worship him, and surrender up our selves to his Command and Disposal, and we are many times strangely inclin'd to follow their Dictates and Directions: But alas! when we come to put them in Execution, we find so many pull-backs within us, so many strong and stubborn Aversions to our good Inclinations, that we have not the Power to do as we wou'd, or to dispose of our selves according to our own most reasonable Desires;



fires; but like miserable Slaves that are chain'd to the Oar, we are fain to row on wherever our superior Lusts do command us, tho' we plainly see we are running on a Rock, and invading our own Destruction. And as we are not free in this ill State of Life to follow our Reason, so neither are we free to follow our *Lusts*. For as when we wou'd follow our Reason, our Lusts cling about and intangle us, so when we wou'd follow our Lusts, our Reason *clogs* and *restrains* us; and by objecting to us the Indecency and Danger, the infinite Turpitude and Hazard of our sinful Courses, lays so many Rubs in our way, that we cannot sin with any *freedom*, but wherever we go, we walk like Prisoners, with the Shackles of *Shame* and *Fear* at our *Heels*. In this Extremity therefore, what is to be done that we may be *free*? The Case is plain, we must resolve to conquer either our *Reason* or our *Lusts*; if we conquer our *Reason*, which we shall find by far the harder Task of the *two*, we shall *acquire* the *Freedom* of *Devils* and *Brutes*; the *Freedom* to do Mischief, and to wallow in the Mire without Shame or Remorse; but if we conquer our *Lusts* we acquire the *Freedom* of Men, nay of *Saints* and *Angels*; the *Freedom* to act reasonably without Reluctance or Aversion; and this being much more easily to be acquir'd than
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the former, I dare appeal to any Man's Reason, which of the two is in it self more eligible; tho' at first we must expect to find our selves confin'd and streighten'd by our vicious Averfations, we shall be immediately releas'd from all that Shame and Fear, which did so continually curb us in the Career of our Wickedness; and even our vicious Averfation, if we courageously persist in our good Resolution, will grow weaker and weaker, and be every Day less and less cumbersome, 'till it is totally extinguish'd; and then we shall feel our selves entirely restor'd into our own Power, and be able, without Check or Controul, to dispose of our selves and all our Motions, according as shall seem to us most fit and reasonable. By engaging our selves in the heavenly Life, we enter into a State of glorious Liberty; and if we constantly persist in it, and do still prevalently list to live as becomes us, we shall be more and more *free* to live as we *list*, 'till at last we are arriv'd into a perfect *Liberty*, in which we shall live without *Restraint* or *Controul*, without Check of Conscience, or Reluctance of Inclination; which are the two main Barrs that confine and strengthen Men in their Operations. If therefore we wou'd ever be *free*, let us immediately come off from our vicious Courses to the Practice of this divine and heavenly Life; wherein

by degrees, if we courageously hold on, we shall wear off those Shackles that do so miserably hamper and intangle us, and then we shall be entirely free to do whatever our *Reason* dictates to us, then we shall *run the ways of God's Commandments*, and, like our blessed Brethren above, be all Life, Spirit, and Wing, in the Discharge of our Duty to him.

Farther, let us consider the *Pleasure* of this *heavenly Life*. 'Tis true, there is a sort of Pleasure that results from all the Acts of a sensual and earthly Conversation, but we find by Experience, that tho' in the Pursuit it strongly allures and enchants us, yet in the Fruition it always disappoints our Expectation, and scarce performs in the Enjoyment one half of what it promis'd to our *Hopes*. At the best, 'tis but a present and transient Satisfaction of our brutish Sense, a Satisfaction that dims the *Sight*, sullies the *Beauty*, impairs the *Vigour*, and restrains the *Activity* of the *Mind*, diverting it from better Operations, and indisposing it to the Fruition of *purser* Delights, leaving no comfortable Relish or gladsome Memory behind it, but often going out in a *Stink*, and determining in Bitterness, Regret and Disgrace. But in each Act of this divine and celestial Light there is something of the Pleasure of Heaven, something of those di-
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vine Refreshments and Consolations upon which the good Spirits of Heaven do live. For the greatest part of their Heaven springs from within their own Bosoms, even from the Conformity of their Souls to the heavenly State, and the sprightly outgoings of their Minds and Actions to the heavenly Objects, from their *contemplating* and *loving*, their *praying* and *adoring* the most high God; from their Imitation of his Perfections, their Subjection to his Will, and Dependence on his Veracity. All which Acts have the most ravishing Pleasures appendent to them, and are so necessary to the Felicity of rational Creatures, that the Wit of Man cannot fancy a *rational Heaven* without them. For the Heaven of a rational Creature consisting in the most intense and vigorous Exercise of its rational Faculties, about the most suitable and convenient Objects, what Object can be more conversant to such Faculties than that Almighty Sovereign of Beings, whose Power is the Spring of all Truth, and whose Nature is the Pattern of all Goodness? Thus, without a perfect Union of our Minds, and Wills, and Affections with God, there can be no possible Idea of a perfect Heaven of *rational Pleasures*, but in this blessed Union lies the very Soul and *Quintessence* of Heaven. Since therefore in every Act of every Virtue of the divine Life,

there is at least an imperfect Union of the Soul with God, it necessarily follows, that there must be some Degree of the Pleasure of Heaven in every one. And if we do not experience much greater Joy and Delight in the Acts of this divine Love, than ever we did in the highest Epicurisms and Sensualities, 'tis not because there are not much greater in them, but because we never exerted them with that Sprightliness and Vigour that we do our sensual Appetites and Perceptions; because we are clogg'd in the Exercise of them, either by false Principles, or bodily Indispositions, or sinful Aversions. But if we wou'd take the Pains to inure and accustom our selves to these heavenly Acts, we shou'd find by Degrees they wou'd grow natural and easy to us, and our Souls wou'd be so habituated, temper'd, and dispos'd to them, that we shou'd upon all Occasions exert them with great Freedom and Enlargement. And then we shou'd begin to feel and relish the Pleasure of them, then we shou'd feel a heavenly Delight springing up from within us, and unfolding itself in each beatifical Act of our heavenly Conversation: We shou'd find our selves under the central Force of Heaven, most sweetly drawn along and attracted thither by the gowerful magnetism of its Joys and Pleasures; and in every Act of our celestial Behaviour

haviour we shou'd have some Foretaste of the celestial Happiness: We shou'd no longer need external Arguments to convince us of the Truth and Reality of that blessed State, for we shou'd feel it within our selves, and be able to penetrate into its blessed Mysteries, by the Light of an infallible Experience. We shou'd have no Occasion to search the Records of Heaven, to assure our selves of our Interest in it; for by a most sensible Earnest of Heaven within us, we shou'd be as fully satisfy'd of our Title to it, as if one of its wing'd Messengers shou'd come down from thence, and tell us he saw our Names enroll'd in the Book of Life. And with this sweet Experience of Heaven, we shou'd go on to the *Perfection* of Happiness, with unspeakable Joy and Triumph. In every vigorous Exercise, of every Virtue of the heavenly Life, we shou'd have such lively Tastes and Sensations of Heaven, as wou'd continually excite us to exert them more vigorously; and still the more vigorously we exerted them, the more of Heaven we shou'd taste in them. Wherefore as we love Pleasure, which is the great Invitation to Action, let us be persuaded once for all to make a thorough Experiment of the heavenly Life; and if upon a sufficient Tryal you do not find it the most pleasant kind of Life that ever you led, if you do not experience a far
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more noble Satisfaction in it than ever you did in all your study'd and artificial Luxuries, we may very well treat all the Writers upon Divinity as Impostors.

Another Consideration, which shou'd weigh with us, is the great *Ease* and *Repose* of a heavenly Life and Conversation. In every sensual and devilish Course of Life we find, by Experience, there is a great deal of *Uneasiness* and *Disquiet*. For the Mind is *disturb'd*, the Conscience gall'd, the Affections divided into opposite Factions, and the whole Soul in a most diseas'd and restless Posture. Indeed it is no wonder it shou'd be so, since 'tis in an unnatural State and Condition: For while 'tis in any unreasonable State of Action, the very Frame and Constitution of it, as it is a rational Being, suffers an unnatural Violence, and is all unjointed and disorder'd. And therefore as a Body, when its Bones are out, is never at rest till they are set again; so a rational Soul, when its Faculties and Powers are *dislocated*, and put out of their *natural*, that is, their *rational* Course of Action, is continually restless and disturb'd, always tossing to and fro, shifting from one Posture to another, turning itself from this to t'other Object and Enjoyment; but finding no Ease or Satisfaction in any, 'till 'tis restor'd again to its own rational Course of Motion, which is

to act and move towards God, for whom it was made, and in whom alone it can be happy. And if its Reason were not strangely dos'd and stupify'd with Sense and sensitive Pleasures, it wou'd doubtless be a thousand times more restless and dissatisfy'd in this its preternatural State than it is. It wou'd feel much more Distraction of Mind, Anguish of Conscience, and Tumults of Affections, than 'tis now capable of, amidst the numerous Enjoyments and Diversions of this World. For as a musical Instrument, were it a living thing, would doubtless be sensible of Harmony as its proper State, and abhor *Discord* and *Dissonancy* as a thing preternatural to it: So were our Reason but alive and awake in us, our Souls, which, according to our natural Frame, were made *uniform* with God, would be exquisitely sensible of these divine Virtues, in which its *Consonancy* consists, as of that which is its proper State and native Complexion; and complain as sadly of the vicious Distempers of its Faculties, as the Body does of Wounds and Diseases. Now by relying on God, we shall totally quit and discharge ourselves of all those restless Cares and Anxieties, which circle and prick us like a Crown of Thorns; by our hearty Submission to his heavenly Will, we shall ease our Consciences of all that Horror, Rage and Anguish, which

which proceed from the invenom'd Stings of our Guilt; by *loving, admiring and adoring* him, our Affections will be cur'd of that Inconsistence and Inordinacy, which render them so *tumultuous* and *disquieting*. These things being once accomplish'd, the sick and restless Soul will presently find itself in perfect Health and Ease; she will be no more tost and agitated in a stormy Sea of troubled Thoughts and guilty Reflections, no more scorch'd with Impatience, or drown'd with Grief, or shaken with Fear, or bloated with Pride or Ambition, but all her Affections will be resign'd to the blessed Empire of a spiritual Mind, and cloath'd in the Livery of her Reason. All the War and Contest between the *Law* in her *Members*, and the *Law* in her *Mind*, is ended in a glorious Victory and happy Peace; and those divided Streams, her Will and Conscience, her Passions and her Reason, are united in one Channel, and flow towards one and the same Ocean. Being thus joyn'd and knit together, by the Ties and Ligaments of Virtue, the Soul is perfectly well and easie, and enjoys a most sweet Repose within itself. Wherefore if we value our own Ease and Rest, and would not be endlessly tormented and disquieted, we should heartily engage our selves in a Course of heavenly Conversation; and then, tho' at first
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we must expect to find some Difficulty in it, by reason of its Contrariety to our corrupt Natures, yet if we vigorously persist in it, we shall find the Difficulty will soon wear off, and then 'twill be all Ease and Pleasure. For when our Nature is deprav'd, either by *Sensuality* or *Devilishness*, 'tis like a Bone out of Joint, full of Pain while it is out, and much more painful while it is setting; but as soon as that is done, 'tis immediately well and easy.

We must consider, in the last Place, the absolute Necessity of this heavenly Life and Conversation; for besides that God exacts it of us, as an indispensable Condition of our Happiness, an heavenly Conversation is, in the Nature of the thing, necessary to qualify us for Heaven: For Happiness being a *relative* thing, implies in the very Nature of it a mutual Correspondence between the Objects, which present us with Happiness, and the Faculties which taste and enjoy them; and be the Objects never so good in themselves, never so pregnant with Pleasure and Bliss, yet if they do not agree with the Faculties to which they are objected, instead of blessing they will but afflict and torment them: And if a Man were plac'd in the midst of Heaven, among all the ravishing Fruitions with which that blessed Place abounds, yet unless his Mind and Temper did

did suit and agree with them, they wou'd be so many Miseries and Vexations to him, and he would be afflicted even in *Abraham's* Bosom, and grope for Heaven in the midst of Paradise. Wherefore supposing God were so unreasonably fond of the Happiness of wicked Souls, as to prefer it before the Honour of his Government, the Purity of his Nature, and the Sanction of his Laws, yet still there is an unmoveable Obstacle behind, which must render their future Felicity impossible, and that is, that it cannot be without a plain Contradiction to the nature of things; the Temper of wicked Souls being so wholly repugnant to all the Felicities of the other World, that if they were all set before them, they would not be able to enjoy them, but must be forc'd to pine and famish amidst all that Plenty of Delights, there being no Viand in all that heavenly Entertainment which they wou'd relish with any Sweetness. If God therefore shou'd so far pardon them, as not to punish them himself by an immediate Stroke of Vengeance, 'twou'd be the utmost Favour his omnipotent Goodness cou'd do for them, while any continu'd in their Sins, which, notwithstanding such a Pardon, wou'd for ever continue them extremely miserable. 'Tis not so much the Place as the State which makes either Heaven or Hell: The
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State of Heaven and Hell consists in perfect Holiness and Wickedness, and proportionably as we improve in either of these, so we approach towards the one State or the other. For as Heaven is the Center of all that is *virtuous*, pure and holy, and all that is good tends thither by a natural Sympathy, so Hell is the Center of all *Impiety* and *Wickedness*, and all that is bad naturally presses and sinks down thither, as towards its proper Place and Element. And shou'd not the divine Vengeance concern itself to exclude all wicked Souls out of Heaven, yet their own Wickedness wou'd do it; for that is a Place of such inaccessible Light and Purity, that no Impurity or Wickedness can approach it, but of Necessity be beaten off with the dreadful Lightnings of its Glory, and tumbled headlong down as often as it tries to climb up thither. As on the other Hand, should not God by an immediate Vengeance precipitate wicked Souls into Hell, yet their own Wickedness, by the mighty Weight of its own Nature, wou'd inevitably press and sink them down into that miserable Condition. If therefore we mean to go to Heaven, and to be happy there, we must now endeavour to dispose our Minds to it; which is no other way to be done, but by leading a heavenly Life and Conversation, which by Degrees will habituate

tuatē and naturalize our Souls to the heavenly Virtues, and so work and inlay them into the Frame and Temper of our Minds, that 'twill be our greatest Pleasures to be exerting and exercising them. They will then be drest and made ready for Heaven, and when we go hence to take Possession of its Joys, they will be all so agreeable to our prepar'd Appetites, that we shall presently fall to, and feed upon them with infinite Gust and Relish. But 'till by living a heavenly Life we have dispos'd our selves for Heaven, we are utterly incapable of enjoying it. Wherefore things are now reduc'd to this Issue, that our *Sins* or our *Souls* must die, and we must necessarily shake Hands either with *Heaven* or our *Lusts*. Unless then we value eternal Happiness so little, as to exchange it for the sordid and trifling Pleasures of Sin, and unless we love our Sins so well as to ransom them with the Blood of our immortal Souls, it concerns us speedily to engage our selves in this heavenly Life and Conversation. For this is an eternal and immutable Law, that if we will be *wicked*, we must be *miserable*.

One wou'd think that such Considerations as these shou'd of themselves be sufficient to set People in the right way which leads to Heaven, to make them in love with Holiness for the pleasantness of
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its Paths, as well as for the Glory to which they tend; but there are certain Minds so clogg'd with Earth, that they can relish nothing which has not a little Mixture of Earthlinefs. The Road to Heaven muſt be more accommodated to their uſual Walk, or they will not be kept in it, they will return as ſoon as they have enter'd it, and be frighten'd at ſo ſtrict and difficult a Paſſage: To engage theſe, there are other Reflections to be offer'd on this Subject, and thoſe that ariſe not ſo much from the Notion of Religion, as the true Idea of things.

'T wou'd be an endleſs Labour to declare what God and his Saints judge of all the things we ſee in this World; it wou'd alone comprehend whatever can be ſaid with Truth: however, 'twill be worth our Pains to make an Eſſay as to ſome of the principal Objects of Man's Deſires, that it may ſerve for a Model how to judge of all others.

One of our greateſt Miſeries is, to ſet too high an Eſteem on temporal things; and the Reaſon we do ſo is, becauſe we ſeldom conſider our ſelves but in that ſmall part of our Duration which makes up our Life here, and becomes part of that *Vortex* which hurries it away without looking any farther: Hence does that falſe Grandeur we allow to things of this World take its Riſe, and the
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only means to undeceive our selves, is to take another Prospect, and to look on our selves such as we are in Truth, and in the Sight of Almighty God: We then immediately find that we have an immortal Being, whose Duration extends to an Eternity that follows, and that we are ordained to be eternally happy or miserable.

Man compar'd to God Almighty, is not only *nothing*, but even all Men together, to him appear but as a Drop of Water to the whole Ocean; all the Greatness and Advantages of the World compar'd to the least of Men, are also to be look'd on as nothing, since they fill up but an indivisible Part of his Duration: Therefore taking him whole and entire, they can neither give a greater Value to him, nor make him more happy. Eternity admits of no Measure or Comparison; if so, what is a Kingdom enjoy'd during the space of seventy Years, and that even of the whole Universe? what is some small Principality in this Kingdom? what shall we say of the several Degrees and States under those of Princes? To what a surprizing Littleness does this Prospect reduce them? and yet Man takes from hence the Occasion and Rise of his Vanity.

'Tis strange to imagine what Difficulty Men have to persuade themselves of the *nothingness* of this World, since every thing
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they see, minds them of it : What else is the History of Men and Nations, but a continual Lesson that Men and Things are nothing? for by describing to us what they were, they at the same time let us see they are no more: They tell us, that all that Greatness, all that Pomp, which from time to time was the Wonder of Men, that all these Princes, all these Conquerors, with all their Magnificence and great Designs, are, in respect to us, shrunk into nothing; that they were certain Vapours which are dispers'd, certain Phantasms which are vanish'd.

What can we descry in this World, but Proofs of this sad Truth? Don't we see every Hour those disappear, who have shone with the greatest Splendor, who have made the greatest Noise, during their Life, while there remains nothing of them, but a slight and fading Memory? Do not we see that all things are continually swallowed up in the Abyss of Time past? That even our Life slips out of our Hands? that what of it is spent, appears no more to our Sight, and that time has hurry'd away all our Miseries, all our Pleasures, all the Troubles and Cares we have, or feel, without leaving behind any other Remembrance of themselves, than such as Dreams do; and it is for this Reason the wise Man bids us look on temporal

ral things, as on the fond Imaginations which trouble our Sleep.

What is most dreadful in this, is, that on one side, we will not conceive the nothingness of the World; and on the other, we apprehend it but too much: Whatever is past and gone, we look on as nothing, all those that are dead, are nothing with us; we take those whose Actions are recorded in Story, for People who have been, but are no more, nor do we reflect that they yet live more than ever, because their Souls are infinitely more active, and that this Life producing only weak and languishing Actions, is rather to be esteem'd a State of Death than Life, in respect of the other. 'Tis also hence, that we nourish in us an Esteem for the Grandeurs of this World, because we take them to be as durable and as lasting as our selves; nor do we dream that we shall subsist after they shall perish; and that those who were once Masters of them, tho' they do not cease to be, shall yet be depriv'd to all Eternity of those things which were the Objects of their Pride.

What shall we say of human Glory, which makes so deep an Impression on our Minds? What has it of solid and real in the sight of Almighty God? It subsists only in the Knowledge we have of the good Opinion others have of us: And these for the most part, are
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such as know us little, love us not much, and whose Judgments, even in our Opinions, are neither solid, nor greatly to be valu'd. In all other things, we often slight and condemn their Sentiments. Besides this good Opinion others have of us, is perfectly useless; it adds nothing either to Soul or Body, nor does it lessen the least of our Miseries; it only contributes to deceive and cheat us, while by them we are inclin'd to judge of our selves, not by the Rule of Truth, but by that of other Mens Opinions, which having busy'd our Heads during Life, when Death comes, they disappear on a sudden, for then we have no Sense or Sentiment for such Trifles; and this is that Smoak, that Vapour which thus fills and puffs us up.

What a Difference then is there between this *human Glory*, and that which the Saints shall enjoy to all Eternity? A Glory as substantial and valuable as that of Man is vain and contemptible, because it has Qualities quite opposite: The Beatitude of the Elect shall be accompany'd with that endearing Spirit of Society and Union, before spoken of; they shall know one another perfectly, they shall jointly give Glory to God for the Favour he has done each one in particular; the good Deeds of each Saint shall then be known to all the rest, and for ever shall they be Occasions
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of Joy, Praise and Thanksgiving, to every blessed Member of those Regions of Bliss; they will cast all their Crowns at the Feet of the *Lamb*, not their own only, but those of all the rest, because they will not only glorifie God in themselves, but shall glorifie him in all his Saints.

Oh the truly solid *Glory* of the Elect of God! A Glory that consists not in a fleeting Splendor, but remains for ever! a Glory not confin'd and built on the Knowledge of some few envious and ignorant People, but which shall have as many Witnesses as there are Citizens in the Celestial *Jerusalem*! a Glory that consists not in the useless and rash Approbation of those who know us not, who know not themselves, but in the Joy of an innumerable Number of holy Spirits, who by the Light of Truth, shall see the bottom of our Hearts.

The Wicked little enjoy their Glory during Life, and it quite vanishes at the Hour of their Death; if for any time it continues in the Memory of Men, 'tis not for them, they have no Share in it; and when all is done, it shall be entirely destroy'd at the Day of Judgment: For the Punishment of the Wicked shall be attended with a Spirit of Division among themselves, as has been already explain'd: The intenseness of their Torments will so entirely employ them about them-

themselves, that they shall leave no room for the Remembrance of that Esteem others had for them when alive; which is a mortifying Consideration for the Men of the World, who are taken up with nothing more than what they call *Quality*, and that which gives some the Denomination of Persons of *Quality*, to distinguish them from such as are not so; they extend this Distinction so far, that a Man is thought to differ less from a Beast, than a Man of *Quality* from one of mean Birth. This *Quality* stifles almost all others, even the most spiritual and divine; we do not only raise it above the Mind, but even above Virtue and the quality of being a Christian: And if it happen we do not make this Difference in positive Words, at least we do in our Judgment; for who are they that sincerely value the Condition of a poor and meanly born Christian, above that of a debauch'd Man of *Quality*? Who is he that can see the profound Abjection of this great one, and high Elevation of that poor Christian? 'Tis plain therefore, that the Idea we have of *Condition* and *Quality*, deceives us, and that it is worth our while to examine what there is of real and substantial in this common Object of Man's Vanity, to the end we may disabuse our selves. Something has been said on this Subject, in treating of others, but the Vanity of Birth is

VOL. III. M so

so apt to swell the Mind, and elate even the Temper of a Christian, that one cannot do better than look a little into this boasted Superiority.

To be a Person of Quality and Birth, according to the World, is to be sprung from Parents who hold a considerable Rank in it; but this Birth of itself, gives no Advantage of either Mind or Body; it takes away no Defect, and Persons of Quality have Faults as great as others: There is therefore no solid Reason which makes Persons of Quality more to be esteem'd than others; nevertheless, because there ought to be a Decorum among Men, 'tis with Reason, that in some Places Custom carries it, that Persons thus born shall enjoy the Precedence of others, and be preferr'd before them.

If we stop'd here, there wou'd be nothing unjust in the Idea we have, of what is call'd *Quality*; but we proceed farther: Of this Arbitrary Order establish'd by Men upon no Grounds, taken from the Persons themselves, we create another which is natural and indispensable, and we accustom our selves to look on it as something fastned to the very Being of those to whom we give this Precedence.

We do not content our selves with giving them that exterior and interior Respect which is due to them, (for in this there
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would be nothing but what's *rational* and *warrantable*) but we add to this what is not due to them, a Respect which springs from our own Errors and Corruptions; we frame to our selves large and corrupt Ideas of this State, we look on it as the very height of all Happiness; we desire it our selves, we envy it in those that have it; and if we prefer them before others, 'tis only out of an ardent Passion we have for the Goods and Honours they enjoy. Thus there is no kind of People Great ones ought to fear more than those that admire them most, because they will be always ready, if they cou'd, to rob them of their Greatness: In the mean time, that such Admirers are very numerous, and we consider not that Disposition which they conceal, but only that Esteem they make Shew of, they are not the least Contributors to this imaginary Felicity of the Great, because in them they find those Sentiments and that Disposition, the Prospect of which is that, which flatters most the Vanity of ambitious Souls.

All these Judgments are false; for 'tis no Happiness to receive from others these Marks of Esteem, and 'tis a plain piece of Injustice to take Delight it being the Object of that Admiration, which springs only from the Corruption of Men. However Persons of Quality, knowing the Sentiments and Ideas,

which the generality have of their Condition, frame thence the Conceit they have of it; they look on it as incorporated in their Being; they fancy themselves rais'd infinitely above the Heads of others; and 'tis almost impossible for them to consider themselves as level'd with those who are below them in the Order of the World. These are those false Ideas we ought to correct, by considering the Judgment God passes in this Estate, even that these Marks of Honour, these Differences establish'd by Men, contain nothing of true and solid, because they are *only Ceremonies and Shews, void of Reality*, as St. Chrysostom terms them. The same must be said of those Judgments, because they are false, and are useless to such as take Pleasure in them, rendring those who delight in them miserable. The Riches and Delights of the Great, lie under the same Censure, giving both alike the same Occasion of Temptation, and proving great Obstacles in their way to Heaven. This is the Judgment God passes on what we call Greatness and Quality; and hence it follows, that whoever judges otherwise, judges wrong; and whatever Discourses give another Idea of them, which inclines us to desire them when wanting, to take Pleasure in them when obtain'd, and to condemn those who have them not, are false and deceitful.

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Next to being nobly born, nothing raises Man higher in the Esteem of the World, than Valour; nor is there any thing, the repute of which does in a greater Degree flatter Persons of Quality, and touching which, they are more sensible and delicate. A Gentleman will suffer any Reproach sooner than that of want of Courage, because he knows the World has allotted Valour the highest Esteem, and Cowardise the greatest Infamy, when found in Persons of this Condition.

If our Task here was only to justify Men in this Point, it wou'd not be a hard one; for since 'tis *Valour* that keeps up Kingdoms, and makes them formidable to their Enemies, 'tis with Reason, since the Services of all the valiant Men, of whom a State has need, cannot be recompenc'd with Rewards equal to their Deserts, that this Quality is become Honourable; nor has it been in the Power of ill-minded Men to bring it into Disparagement, whatever Artifices have been us'd to set the glorious Services of true Valour in the most odious Light. Honour was ever the Recompence of those, who by their Courage serv'd their Country well: There is therefore some Justice in this Esteem in relation to Men, and consequently some also in relation to God, for he approves all

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that is just and necessary for the Conservation of human Societies.

But because in the Esteem we allow *Valour*, we may go beyond the Bounds of Truth, and by false Praises extol in it what deserves no Esteem; we must consult what God judges of it, and learn of him what there is in this Quality of Real and Great, and what only appears such by the Error and Illusion of Men.

Tho' the Ladies do not seem to be so much concern'd in this Subject, as to have it laid before them, yet when we consider what has been the ill Consequences of their setting too high a Value on this Quality in the other Sex, and sometimes of enflaming it on every unwarrantable Occasion, it will not be found improper to handle it for their Sakes, as well as for the Men's, whose more immediate Concern it is to form a right Notion of a thing that is so very much mistaken. We have in a preceding Volume given a Hint or two on this Head to which we shall now add:

That *Valour* may be consider'd two ways; either as a Passion, that is, an Impression coming from the Imagination and Body, or as regulated and guided by the Will. To consider it in the first Place, we may take notice, that as there are some who being rais'd high above the rest, are not sub-

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ject to be dazled, nor feel those Weaknesses caus'd by the Force of Imagination on such as have not been us'd to those fearful Sights; so there are others who either by Nature, or out of Custom, are not surpriz'd by the Dangers of War; who preserve there the same Calmness and Presence of Mind, who can foresee all, take all Advantages, and to whom the Sight of an arm'd Enemy inspires new Vigour and Force to encounter and surmount them, and these are those we call *valiant and brave Men*.

There is no doubt but such a Disposition as this deserves our Esteem; but while we look on it only in this Degree, the Imagination and Body share more in it than the Will. For if in these Persons the Spirit and Blood took some other Course, all their Valour cou'd not free them from Fear, as it cannot hinder them from being startled, when from an high Place they look down a Precipice.

Thus, as God sets no Value on any thing in us, which is not voluntary and virtuous, so if he allow that Men out of Necessity shou'd have allotted Valour certain human Rewards, yet he will not have them equalize it to the least of those Virtues he is the Author of. Wherefore the joint Valour of all Conquerors, consider'd in this Degree, and as only a natural Dispositi-

on of the Imagination, deserves not to be compar'd to the least Motion of Grace, which God produces in the Heart of some simple Women: Because all Qualities, purely human, die with Man, while the least Virtues have Effects that subsist to all Eternity. The Idea therefore which the Discourses of the World frame of Valour is false, in as much as it exceeds *Truth*, and that in lieu of having it plac'd among purely *human Qualities*, it raises it above the most *spiritual* and *divine Virtues*.

But their Illusion is infinitely greater in the Judgment they pass on Valour, consider'd as voluntary, that is, on the Use that's made on it; for they equally esteem those that are accounted *brave* and *valiant*, whether their *Valour* be accompany'd with *Justice* or *Injustice*, *Prudence* or *Rashness*. Yet what a prodigious Difference does *Truth* itself place, between things which Man scarce distinguishes? To expose our Lives where Duty and Justice require, and to sacrifice them to God, where he engages us, is an Act of so high a Generosity, that Christian Religion has nothing that's greater. But to expose them in an ill Cause, and so by Death rashly thrust our selves into the Hands of an exasperated and omnipotent God, is so prodigious a Folly, that we need no greater Proof of the Blindness
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of Man, than the placing his Glory in so senseless an Action.

Nay, it often happens, that we bestow most unjustly the Name of Courage on the weakest Part of those Actions. Men do not expose themselves to Danger because they flight it, but because they see it not: Their Souls are wholly taken up, either by the Renown they pretend to, or some other Trifle, which filling the whole Capacity of the Mind, conceals all things else from it. The Praises they expect from Men cannot spring but from Folly, while even the greater Number of those who are truly valiant, look on these Actions as Marks of a false and bastard *Valour*: A Moment sees them at an End, and an eternal Repentance follows them. This Vanity is in the *Devils* the Object of their Laughter, in *Angels* of their Indignation, in *God* of his Wrath against a wretched Man, who being touch'd with so little Dread of his Justice, and ready to fall into his Hands, dare affront him with so much Insolence, as all do who dare engage in an ill Cause; and to distinguish a good from an ill one, is seldom the Care of such irregular Minds.

Life, the sole Good of Men, a Treasure whose Loss is irrecoverable, a Price with which Eternity is bought, is the thing in the World the most contemn'd and slighted

by those thoughtless Heroes, who know as little how to live reasonably in this World, as they are prepar'd for the next. There is no Reward so base or mean, for which some Men will not hazard it, and for which at every Turn it is not cast away. Men seem to be weary of Life, since they seek to be quit of it so rashly, and for so small Trifles throw it away. Thus we may discover as a certain Truth, that all this false *Valour* which casts Men headlong into Duels, unjust Quarrels, and useless Dangers, to which they expose themselves thro' a ridiculous Vanity, is nothing else but either a not knowing the Value, or a forgetting the End of Life; a darkening of the Soul, which conceals Danger, or a foolish and unreasonable Assurance of escaping it, or a violent Application to some Object of our Passions; and what is it that deserves our Esteem in all this? Is it a sign of an undaunted Courage in a deaf Man not to startle at the Thunder of a Cannon? Or in a blind one, not to be mov'd at the dreadful Sight of an Enemy? There is no Courage in not standing in dread of God Almighty, because nothing but a horrible Blindness can be exempt from such a Fear. God is so terrible, that when he has a mind to make us sensible of his Anger, no fond Belief of ours, with which we flatter'd our *Guilt*, can shelter us from the least of his

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Regards, and even the Wicked are forc'd to cry, in the Excess of their Consternation, *to the Hills, that they fall upon them.* How mad then are weak and wretched Men, to out-dare God Almighty, tho' for a Moment, when he delays his Punishment; since they thus run the Hazard of being the Objects for ever of his rigorous Justice, when they cannot at all hinder their coming under the lash?

What then must we think of those Bravos the World with so little Judgment esteems so much? We must think and judge as God judges, we must approve of those he approves, we must condemn those he condemns, and make the Differences between such and such that he does. And as we ought not to deny some those due Praises their Generosity deserves, so ought we to have for others that just Contempt which is due to their brutish *Valour*.

It may be alledg'd, that there is something more solid and real in the Qualities and Endowments of the Mind, such as are Sciences, Eloquence, a graceful Mien in Conversation, Address in Business, Capacity of great Affairs, with Strength of Brain to go thro' with them, and particular Prudence in the Conduct of our Designs, and Management of our Fortunes. Now the whole Value we ought to set on these, consists only in the Use we make of, and the
End.

End to which we refer them. They are necessary Instruments for the Employment of Life; and hence those who live in the World, lie under an Obligation of cultivating them with great Care, because they ought to know that since Men have assign'd them a great Value, 'tis impossible to succeed in any thing without being Master of them.

But if we separate them from their Use, and only consider them in themselves; or as the Measures to arrive at some low and temporal End, they lose so much their Esteem and Value, that the Condition of those who are Masters of them, is not at all preferable to that of others who want them. And for this reason 'tis of greatest Importance, not to be deceiv'd with the vain Panegyricks of those that wou'd flatter us on such Endowments, as consider'd in themselves, and separated from the Use which might be made of them.

Wit is what Men are most ambitious to have the Character of, as it gives a kind of Superiority of Mind, when taken in the best Sense; but the very Idea we have of what is called a Man of Parts or Wit, is perfectly false; and one of those, in which we most of all ought to disabuse our selves. For we call Wit a certain Facility to learn Sciences, to discourse well on what is offer'd, to manage

nage Affairs with Address, or to find out some happy Means to bring difficult Matters to a good Conclusion; nothing of which goes to the making up that true *Light of Mind* which forms a just Wit, since those Endowments may be found in those, who, as the Scriptures tell us, are blind wretched Fools, insensate and void of Understanding. What is it then to be a Man of Wit? Let us judge of it by taking a View of the Sight of our *Body*, which is the Image of our Souls; To see well is to see things such as they are, what's great as great, and what's little as little. Those to whom a Mountain shall appear a Mole-Hill, and a Mole-Hill a Mountain, would be said to be very ill-sighted: They who can conceive things that are great as such, and that with an Apprehension full of Light and Life, and who see things that are little in their natural Dimension, without increasing or lessening them by their Imagination, are great Wits, and Men of accurate right Judgments. Thus he who said *He fear'd God as a swell'd Sea hanging over his Head*, and he who said, *Who is like to thee, O Lord, who is like to thee?* and he who said, *The Magnificence of God was rais'd above the Winds*, was one of a great Wit, because God appear'd great in his Eyes, and he was fully possess'd and convinc'd of his Magnificence and Greatness. He had then

a Sight which was clear, and extended far. Thus an infinite Number of simple Women, who in Concerns of this World appear of no Parts, are great Wits, because to them God shews, and as it were makes himself even to be touch'd and seen; whereas such as have only a Wit to understand a mathematical Demonstration, to discourse well, to carry on a Negotiation or Intrigue, without seeing the things of the next World, under any other Dimensions than those of Atoms, are but little Wits, and deserve no other Names than those the Scripture affords them, *Of Little Ones, of Simple, without either Sight or Light.* As the Idea which is commonly fram'd of Wit, taken as the *Light* of the *Mind*, is false, so that which we have of its Strength is no less so: We make it consist in being able to sustain the Weight of a great Number of Affairs, without being dismay'd, tir'd, or confounded with them. Behold, says the World, a strong Brain that's able to comply with and manage so great a Number of different Affairs: But perhaps, on the contrary, we ought to say, what a weak Head is this that stands in need of so many Employments to sustain and keep it up? And how little Vigour has this Soul, that wants so many Helps to prevent its being dismay'd or weary of itself? Take these Employments
from

from this Man, and you shall presently see him dull and languishing. 'Tis not we that support our Affairs, 'tis they that bear us up; on them we find a Bed, on which our Souls in their Weakness *repose*. The Strength and Vigour of a Soul consists in being able to continue without these Stays, and pleasing itself only with God, and in his Presence. If there be any Strength in those who are not tir'd with the tumultuous Employments of this World, 'tis a Strength which depends on the *Organization* of the Body, not a true Strength of the Soul.

'Tis true, there's something in Man that's great, and let him apply his Mind to what he pleases, there will always appear some Sign of Grandeur and Excellence. But even from this Grandeur proceeds his Misery and Meanness, when he gives his Mind to what merits not his Application, and neglects those other things which only deserve his careful Thoughts and Affections. If Man were less than he is, all these Qualities and Endowments wou'd be greater: and they are but mean and little, because he is call'd to things of a far higher Strain, and infinitely more important, which he passes by and neglects, while he too much applies himself to those other.

Science has something in it that looks glaring, but the greatest part of *human Sciences* are so inconsiderable in themselves, and contribute so little to Man's Felicity, that we are every whit as happy living in Ignorance and Contempt as in the Knowledge and Over-value of them. Vanity and Opinion set a Price on them, and we desire only to be learn'd for others, not for our selves. Hence *Seneca*, all *Stoick* as he was, confesses that he car'd not for *Wisdom*, which was the *Idol* of those of his Sect, were he prohibited to discourse of it with others. The whole Reward and Fruit he desir'd to draw from thence, was only the Praise and Approbation he expected to have from others. But as *Opinion* sets the *Rate* on *Sciences*, so does it also debase them when it pleases. *Men* have been pleas'd not to judge *Learning* fit for *Women*, and yet *Men* do not think them miserable, nor are they themselves sensible of the Want. Some Ladies of Quality conceal the Skill they have in polite Literature, as asham'd of it, and they are in the right, for there's always some Shame in being burthen'd with an useles Knowledge. If all those of that Sex, who have apply'd themselves to the Study of curious *Sciences*, did the like, they wou'd but thence deserve more Esteem.

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Nevertheless 'tis true, that some of these *Sciences* are very beneficial to *human Society*, and afford to some great Advantages: And for this Reason it has been well done to affix to them certain Honours and Rewards, but for the most part they procure their Owners more Harm than Good.

Let us run over all those we know to have been Men of Wit and Parts in the World, and upon Consideration we shall find very few who have not thereby been damag'd for the next World: Had not such a one been a Man of Parts he had never been chosen Bishop; he had never then been charg'd with the Sins of the whole Diocese: 'Tis by his good Parts that another is rais'd to a great Office, and great Employments, and thereby hazards his Conscience thro' a thousand dangerous Intrigues. If another had not had an easie Utterance, he had never been a Preacher, and so not spent his Life in an abusive Dispensation of God's Word. Without Parts we press not forward in the World, and by living privately we shun a thousand unfortunate Engagements.

But it is not possible to set a Value on these Endowments, by considering them separately, from the good or bad Use that may be made of them. This is necessary to be done because they are often known, but not the bad Use they are put to. However,

ver, 'tis certain that this way of considering them by themselves, without reflecting on the Use that's made of them, is the Origin of great Illusion both to us and others. For these Qualities consist not in the Air abstracted from their good or bad Use; and when they are ill employ'd they derive no Esteem, since they only increase the Guilt of those that have them.

The holy Scripture only calls that *Science* which teaches us how to live, accounting all that are ignorant of it *Fools* and *Madmen*. Nor wou'd *Man*, were he rational, speak any other Language than this; for 'tis most conformable to *Reason* and *Nature*, and only his Blindness has brought another Dialect into Fashion. Not but that each *Science* teaches some particular *Truths*, but because we stand in so urgent a Necessity of that Knowledge which leads to Heaven, we are not permitted to reckon the rest for any thing. Were we in a Storm, we should only value that Art which might serve us there, and no body ever thought of praising a Paper of Verses, when the Question was how to avoid a threaten'd Shipwreck. Let a Man be sick, he only in his Physician values that Skill which may cure his Disease, all the rest of his good Qualities vanish, and are not taken notice of. In a Word, all those great Concerns, which ought

ought totally to employ and take us up, give us leave only to consider such Abilities as may be serviceable to them. But what greater Concern can we have, than that of saving our Souls, shunning Hell and purchasing Heaven? What greater and more terrifying Danger, than that of perishing eternally? What deserves more to take up all our Thoughts, than the Care of preparing for an Eternity? It is therefore against Nature and Reason, to set so high a Price on certain Qualities and Endowments that contribute nothing to it.

Nor is this a mere Question about Words; Things themselves are concern'd, since the Words carry the Things along with them. Were it only about Words, it wou'd be a small Inconvenience to bestow the Name of learned, skilful, and Men of good Parts, on those who might excel in *human Sciences*, because in reality, as useless as they are consider'd in themselves, they yet continue to be the Marks of the Greatness of human Wit: But we stop not here; to these Words we fasten certain Sentiments of our Souls, and we always accompany them with an interior Judgment of Esteem and Excellency, we raise those on whom we bestow these Names above others, and here they become false and deceitful. For whereas a *Poet* that's no *Christian*, an eloquent Preacher that leads a disorderly

orderly Life, or an able Politician that thinks not on God, are infinitely less estimable than the weakest Woman that lives according to his Laws; yet under the Favour of these Names, we fail not in our own Thoughts and Imaginations to bestow a most eminent Degree and Place on those Persons, whom we ought, notwithstanding their great Knowledge and Learning, to consider as in the lowest Degree of Blindness and Abjection.

If Men are not capable of being spoken to in this Language, at least we ought to speak it to our selves. And thus by judging of things by the Relation they have to God and what's eternal, instead of those several Conditions and Degrees of Men in the World, we shall only find two, but those prodigiously different, if we look on them with the Eyes of Faith, tho' the Difference be unknown to Sense. One of the Classes is made up of the *Just*, the other of *Sinners*. It will be profitable, to excite in us the liveliest Idea we possibly can have of these two States, to the end it may help to obscure and stifle in our Minds all those Distinctions which Men have establish'd and built among themselves on certain Qualities, whether exterior or interior, real or imaginary.

What

What then does a *Sinner*, and one without God, appear to the Eyes of Faith, that is, to Truth it self? He is one that's blind, because he does not partake of true Light, knowing neither God nor himself, his Friends nor Enemies, Good nor Evil. Let him be as intelligent as he will in the Affairs of this World, yet does he live and walk in Darkness, since he blindly falls at every Step, and knows not where to place his Feet.

He's one that's Deaf, since he hears not the Voice of God, nor admits to his Heart his divine Word, tho' it may make a Noise in the Ears of his Body. He is one sick of a Palsie, because his Heart is without Motion, nor aspires up towards God, is always on the Ground, and in an utter Disability of ever raising it self.

He is a Man reduc'd to an Extremity of Want and Beggary, because despoil'd of all true Riches which are only Spiritual: He has lost whatever God bestow'd on him in his *Baptism*: To him no more belongs any Right to his Inheritance, which is Heaven.

He is not only poor as to the Riches of Grace, but even as to the Goods of this World: For tho' to Appearance he is in possession of great Wealth, and others have no Right to deprive him of it, yet does he *unjustly* keep it as to God. He no more deserves

serves to enjoy it. He's unworthy the Use of any of his Creatures.

He's a Bond-slave, not only to his Passions which domineer over him, but to the Devil who possesses him, dwells in him, moves, agitates, and makes him do and act as he pleases, who without ceasing deceives him, and turns him into the Subject of his Disport and Laughter, according to the Phrase of Holy Scripture. Nay he's a Slave of the *Just*, and those God has chosen; that is, his whole Employment during his Life, is to labour for the Good of others, not for his own, and to contribute to the Good of the *Elect*, without drawing thence any Benefit for himself. 'Tis thus the *Angels* and *Saints* look on those who are Great and Wealthy; who fancy the whole World only made for themselves, while on the contrary, God only esteems them made for others; nor does he permit them to live but for the Service of the *Elect*, who are the only *Masters* and *Kings* in his Sight, and who will drive them out of their House, when the time shall come that they stand in no more need of them, *because the Slave does not remain in the House of his Master.*

A *Sinner* is a Man reduc'd to a shameful *Nakedness*, because he has lost the Robe of *Innocence* and *Justice*: Let his *Magnificence* be never so great, with which he endea-

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vours to cloath his Ignominy; his *Greatness*, as St. *Austin* says, are but the *Raggs of the Devil*. These are not only Shameful, but over and above great *Deceivers*, because the Devil only lends them, to the end that Man fixing there, and making them the Object of a ridiculous Vanity, he may lose all Sense of his true Misery, and never endeavour to recover what he has lost. These he will take from him at his Death, and make him for all Eternity sensible of the *Nakedness* he is reduc'd to.

A *Sinner* is a Man that is dead, and a thousand times more senseless than the Dead themselves. His very Soul is dead; whereas others die only as to the Body. I say, his very Soul is dead; nor do I here use any *Metaphor*. The Soul only lives by Love and Knowledge. Thus the Love and Knowledge (of what is the Good of Man, that is) of God, is the true Life of the Soul; and when it loses this Love and this Knowledge, it loses its true Life, tho' it retains another poor and miserable one, by the Love it bears to, and the Knowledge it has of the Creatures. 'Tis for this Reason, that it is said by *Wisdom* to its *Children*, *Wisdom gives her Sons Life*, because on them it bestows the Knowledge and Love of God.

The Comparison therefore is very natural and exact, which the Fathers make between

tween a Soul in Sin, and a moving Sepulchre; because the Soul being dead, the Body that incloses it may in some sort be said to be its Grave. And this Comparison runs so much the better, in that, as a *Tomb* is adorn'd without, but fill'd within with nothing but Dirt and Corruption; so the *Sinner* whose Outside appears so pleasing and grateful, flattering our Senses by these exterior Endowments, conceals within so horrible a Corruption and Stench, that it wou'd prove intolerable were it laid open to Sight.

The dreadful Misery of *Sinners*, may help us to conceive the inestimable Happiness of the *Just*, since we know already, that 'tis a great good Fortune to be freed from so wretched a Condition. The *Just* are no more either *blind* or *deaf Beggars*, or benumm'd with *Palsies*; they are no *Slaves*, nor *naked*, nor in a State of Death; but they enjoy the Light of Almighty God; they, as Friends, hear his Voice; they raise themselves up towards him, by the Motions and Sentiments of their *Hearts*; they are possess'd of the Treasures of Grace, and freed from the Slavery of the *Devil* and *Sin*; they are clad with the Robes of Innocency, and live the true Life, that is the Life of *Charity*.

But we must yet make a farther Progress, before we can conceive any part of their
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Grandeur, we must say they are *Kings*, being Associates in Royalty with our Saviour *Jesus Christ*; that they are Lords of the World, since the whole *Creation* continues but for, and in relation to them; that they are *Children* of God, since they are adopted for his by being united to his only Son; that they are *Heirs* of *Heaven*, since that is the Inheritance of our Saviour, and a Right to it has been conferr'd on them by the Pledge of the Holy Ghost, which they have receiv'd; that they are the *Temple* of God, since he dwells in them, and that they are animated by his Holy Spirit; that they are *Members* of *Jesus Christ*, making up part of his Body, by the Participation of his Spirit.

We must endeavour to imprint in our Minds, as deep as we can, these Ideas, that we may be able to resist the Impressions made only by the Discourses of Men, who fill our Heads with Conceits of false Grandeur, false Objections, false Goods and Evils: And for this Reason it is, the Holy Scriptures so often raise us up to admire the Just. *Blessed are those who are without Blame in the Ways of God: Blessed are those who sound the Depth of his Precepts: Blessed is the Man who fears God: Blessed is the Man who follows not the Counsel of the Wicked: Blessed, O Lord, are those who dwell in thy*

VOL. III.

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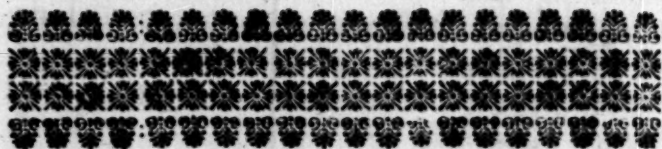
House. On the contrary, they endeavour to take from us that Esteem we have for all those humane Qualities, which are the usual Object of Man's Vanity. *Let not the Wise glory in his Wisdom, nor the Strong in his Strength, nor the Rich in his Riches; but be that has a Mind to glorifie himself, let it be in knowing me, in knowing that I am the Lord, who exercise Mercy, Judgment and Justice in the Earth: for these are the things that please me, says the Lord.*

The sacred Writ proceeds yet farther, and wills us to look on Sinners, not only as reduc'd by Sin to a low Degree of *Abjection*, but even to a State of *Annihilation*. And while in this manner it paints them forth, at the same time it buries and annihilates with them all their *Greatness*, all their *Riches*, all their *Qualifications*, as well the interior as the exterior ones. It will not permit that any thing of these shou'd make them even to subsist in our sight, or make us to judge there is any thing of real and solid in their Condition.

And it is thus the Holy Scripture wou'd have us to consider whatever has no Relation to God. This is that express Conclusion which it made a great King, on whom God had heap'd all the *Grandeurs* and *Pleasures* of the World, to deduce, to the end he might be more able to teach us the Vanity

nity of them all. In pursuit of this Design he does in particular represent to us the Nothingness of all Pleasures, of all Greatness, of all Employments, of all Enterprizes consider'd in themselves, and not referr'd to God. After all he concludes the Sum of his Instructions with these Words, *Fear God, and keep his Commandments; for in this consists the very Being of all Men.* That is to say, Whatever tends not to God and the keeping his Law, has no Being, no Reality, cannot be solid and happy; and so, before Almighty God, is a total Privation of Good. Thus it is God judges of the things of this Earth, and therefore we ought not to judge otherwise; and by this Rule it is, that we shou'd reform all those false Ideas and Notions we receive from our Conversation; which wou'd naturally lead us to live a Life of *Religion*, the end of which is a Life of eternal Glory.





P R A Y E R.



THE several Duties and Exercises of Religion, which will be treated of under the following Heads, *Prayer, Fasting, Repentance, the Sacrament, Zeal, &c.* have been touch'd upon in several of the *preceding*; but having not been so thoroughly and particularly consider'd, as the Importance of them requires, 'twill be necessary to treat of them at large, for the greater Instruction and Profit of the Reader: In doing which we shall begin with *Prayer*.

There is no greater Argument in the World of our spiritual Danger, than the manifest Indisposition there is in us to Religious Duties, nor any plainer Instance of that than the Backwardness which most Men have always, and all Men have sometimes, to say their *Prayers*: So weary are
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we of their Length, so glad when they are done, so witty to excuse and frustrate an Opportunity; and yet all Prayer is nothing but a desiring of God to give us the greatest and the best things we can need, and which can make us happy. It is a Work so easy, so honourable, and to so great Purpose, that in all the Instances of Religion and Providence, except only the Incarnation of his Son, God has not given us a greater Argument of his Willingness to have us sav'd, than by Rewarding so easy a Duty with so great Blessings; neither do we in any Case more plainly shew our Contempt of his Mercy.

Ought we not seriously to consider, that God and his blessed Son command it, that 'tis an Act of Grace and highest Honour, that we, *Dust* and *Asbes* as we are, are admitted to speak to the eternal God, to run to him as to a Father, to lay open our Wants, to complain of our Burthens, to present our Scruples, to beg Remedy and Ease, Support and Counsel, Health and Safety, Deliverance and Salvation? God has invited us by many gracious Promises of hearing us; he has appointed his most glorious Son to be the Mediator between us and him, and to make continual Intercession for us at the Throne of Grace; he has put it into the Hands of Men, to rescind or alter

all the Decrees of God which are conditional, and concern our Estate whether temporal or eternal, by the Power of Prayers. The Prayers of good Men have sav'd Cities and Kingdoms from Ruin, have rais'd the *Dead to Life*, have stopp'd the *Violence of Fire*, shut the *Mouths of wild Beasts*, alter'd the Course of Nature, caus'd *Rain in Egypt*, and *Drought in the Sea*. Prayer has made the *Sun* to go from *West to East*, and the *Moon* to stand still; it has compell'd *Rocks and Mountains* to walk; it cures Diseases without *Physick*; and makes *Physick* do the Work of Nature, Nature do the Work of Grace, Grace do the Work of God, and does Miracles in Accident and Event. Tho' it does all this, 'tis of it self nothing but an Ascent of the Mind to God, a desiring of things fit to be desired, and an Expression of this Desire to God, as we can, and as becomes us. Our Unwillingness to pray, is nothing else, but a not desiring what we ought passionately to long for; or if we do desire it, 'tis a chusing rather to wish our Satisfaction and Felicity than to ask for it.

In the Exercise of *Prayer*, we must be careful that we never ask any thing of God that's sinful, or that directly ministers to *sin*; for that wou'd be to ask God to dishonour himself, and to undo us. It equally imports

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us, to consider what we *pray* for, before it returns in Blessing, it must be joyn'd with Christ's Intercession and presented to God: Let us principally ask of God, Power and Assistance to do our Duty, to glorify him, to do good Works, to live a good Life, to die in his Fear and Favour, and after Death to enjoy Life eternal. These things God delights to give, and commands that we shou'd ask; wherefore we may with Confidence expect to be graciously answer'd. For these things are procur'd without any Reservation of a secret Condition: If we ask them, and do our Duty towards the obtaining of them, we are sure never to miss them.

We may lawfully *pray* to God for the Gifts of the Spirit that minister to holy Ends, such as are the Gift of *Prayer*, good Understanding, Learning, Opportunities to publish them, and the like; with these only Restraints, That we cannot be so confident of the Event of those *Prayers* as of the former; that we must be curious to secure our Intentions in these Desires; that we may not ask them to serve our own Ends, but only for God's Glory; and then we shall have them, or a Blessing for desiring them. In order to such Purposes, our Intention in the first Desires cannot be amiss, because they are able to sanctifie other things, and therefore cannot be unhallow'd themselves.

selves. We must submit to God's Will, desiring him to chuse our Employment, and to provide for our Bodies as he shall see expedient.

Whatever we may lawfully desire of Temporal things, we may lawfully ask of God in *Prayer*, and we may expect them as they are promis'd. Whatever is necessary to our Life and Being, is promis'd to us, and therefore we may with Certainty expect *Food* and *Raiment*. We may be sure of Maintenance, but not of our Life; for *that* is promis'd, not *this*. Only concerning Food and Raiment we are not to make Accounts by the Measure of our *Desires*, but by the Measure of our *Needs*. Whatever is convenient for us, pleasant and modestly Delightful, we may *pray* for it, provided we do it with Submission to God's Will, without impatient Desires, if it be not a Trifle and inconsiderable, but a Matter so grave, as to be fit to be treated on between God and our Souls. We must not ask it to spend upon our Lusts, but for Ends of Justice, or Charity, or Religion, and whatever we ask, must be employ'd with Sobriety.

He who would pray with Effect, must live with *Care* and *Piety*: For tho' God gives to Sinners the common Blessings of Life and Chance, yet either they want the

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Comfort of those Blessings, or they become Occasions of sadder Accidents to them, or serve to upbraid them with their Ingratitude or Irreligion; and in all Cases they are not the Effects of *Prayer*, or the Fruits of *Promise*, or Instances of a Father's Love, for they cannot be expected with Confidence, or receiv'd without Danger, or us'd without a Curse and Mischief in their Company. But as all *Sin* is an Impediment to *Prayer*, so some are a special Obstacle to Acceptance; such are Uncharitableness and Wrath, Hypocrisy in the present Action, Pride and Lust, because these by defiling the Body or the Spirit, or by contradicting some necessary Ingredient in *Religion*, such as are Mercy, Humility, Purity and Sincerity, do defile the *Prayer*, and make it a direct Sin in the Circumstances or Formality of the Action.

All *Prayer* must be made with *Faith* and *Hope*. We must certainly believe we shall receive the *Grace* which God has commanded us to ask; and we must *hope* for such things as he has permitted us to ask: Our *Hope* shall then not be in vain; tho' we miss what is not absolutely promis'd, because we shall at least have an equal Blessing in the Demand as in the Grant. Therefore the former Conditions must first be secur'd: Whatever we ask for must be necessary, or

at least good, innocent and profitable. Our Person must be render'd gracious in God's Sight, or else what he has promis'd to our natural Needs, he may, in many Degrees, deny to our personal Incapacity. After our good Intentions are secur'd, we are sure of a Blessing, but in what Instance we are not yet assur'd.

Our *Prayers* must be fervent, intense, earnest and importunate, when we *pray* for things of high Concernment and Necessity. *Continuing in Prayer, striving in Prayer, labouring fervently in Prayer, Night and Day praying exceedingly, praying always with all Prayer.* And this is not at all to be abated in Matters Spiritual, and of Duty; for according as our Desires are, so are our Prayers; and as our Prayers are, so shall be the Grace; and as that is, so shall be the Measures of Glory. But this admits of Degrees, according to the Perfection or Imperfection of our State of Life. It has no other Measures, but ought to be as great as it can. The bigger the better; we must make no positive Restraints upon our selves. In other things we are to use a Bridle; and as we must limit our Desires with Submission to God's Will, so also we must limit the Importunity of our *Prayers*, by the Moderation and Term of our Desires.

Our *Desires* must be lasting, and our *Prayers* frequent, assiduous, and continual; not asking for a Blessing once and then leaving it, but daily renewing our Suits, and exercising our *Hope, Faith, Patience, Long-suffering, Religion, Resignation* and *Self-denial*; in all the Degrees we shall be put to. This Circumstance of Duty is taught us by our blessed Saviour himself. *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* But because we cannot always ask several things, and we have also frequent need of the same things, and those such as concern our great Interest, the Precept comes home to this very Circumstance, and St. *Paul* calls it, *Praying without ceasing*; himself in his own Case giving us a Precedent. *For this Cause I besought the Lord thrice.* And so did our blessed Redeemer, *he went thrice* to God on the same Errand, with the same Words, in a short Space, about half a Night, for his time to sollicite his Suit was but short. The *Philippians* were remember'd by the Apostle, *always in every Prayer of his.* And thus we must always *pray* for the Pardon of our *Sins*, for the Assistance of God's *Grace*, for *Charity*, for *Life-eternal*, never giving over 'till we die: And thus also we pray for Supply of great temporal Needs in their several Proportions; in all Cases being curious, we do not give over out of Weariness

or Impatience. For God often defers to grant our Suit, because he loves to hear us beg it, and has a Design to give us more than we ask, even a Satisfaction of our Desires, and a Blessing for the very Importunity.

The Words of our *Prayers* shou'd be pertinent and grave; material, not studiously many, but according to our Need, sufficient to expresse our Wants, and to signalize our Importunity. God hears us not the sooner for our many Words, but much the sooner for our earnest Desire. A long *Prayer* and a short, differ not in their Capacities of being accepted, for both of them take their Value, according to the Fervency of Spirit, and the Charity of the *Prayer*. That *Prayer* which is short, by reason of an impatient Spirit, or Dulness, or Slight of holy Things, or Indifferency of Desires, is very often criminal, always imperfect; and that *Prayer* which is long out of Ostentation, or Superstition, or a trifling Spirit, is as criminal and imperfect as the other in their several Instances. This Rule relates to private *Prayer*; in publick our Devotion is to be measur'd by the appointed Office, and we are to support our Spirit with spiritual Acts, that our *private* Spirit may be a part of the *publick* Spirit,
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and accepted into the Society and Blessings of the Communion of Saints.

In all Forms of *Prayer*, mingle *Petition* with *Thanksgiving*, that you may endear the present *Prayer* and the future Blessing, by returning Praise and Thanks for what you have already receiv'd. This is *St. Paul's* Advice, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God.*

Whatever we beg of God, let us also work for it, if the thing be matter of Duty, or a Consequent to Industry. For God loves to bless Labour and to reward it: Therefore our blessed Saviour in his Sermons, joyns *Watchfulness* with *Prayer*; for God's Graces are but Assistances, not new Creations of the whole Habit, in every Instant or Period of our Life. Read the Scriptures, and then pray to God for Understanding. Pray against Temptation, but you must also resist the Devil, and then he will flee from you. Ask of God Competency of Living; but you must also work with your Hands the things that are honest, that you may have to supply in time of Need. We can but do our Endeavour, and pray for a Blessing; the Success we must leave to God.

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We must be careful in all our *Prayers* to attend our present Work, having a present Mind, not wandering upon Impertinent things, not distant from our Words, much less contrary to them. If our Thoughts do at any time wander, and divert upon other Objects, we must bring them back again with prudent and severe Arts, by all means striving to obtain a diligent, sober, and compos'd Spirit.

The Posture and Gesture of our Body in *Prayer* ought to be reverend, grave, and humble, both in publick and private, either *standing* or *kneeling*, in your ordinary or more solemn *Prayers*; but in your extraordinary, casual, and ejaculatory *Prayers*, the Reverence and Devotion of your Soul, and the lifting up the Eyes and Hands to God, with any other Posture not indecent, is usual and commendable. For we may pray in *Bed*, on *Horseback*, *every where*, and at all *times*, and in all Circumstances. Some Servants have not Opportunity to pray so often as they wou'd, unless they supply the Appetites of Religion with such accidental Devotions.

The Apostle St. Paul directs, *That Prayers and Supplications, and giving of Thanks, be made for all Men, for Kings, and all that are in Authority; for this is good and acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour. We*
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who must love our Neighbours as our selves, must also pray for them as for our selves, with this only Difference, that we may enlarge in our temporal Desires, for Kings and Governours ruling in Righteousness and the Fear of the Lord. We may pray for secular Prosperity to them, with more Importunity than for our selves, because they need more to enable them to discharge their Duty in Government for the Interests of Religion and Justice. This part of Prayer is by the Apostle call'd *Intercession*, in which with special Care we are to remember our Relations, our Family, our Benefactors, not forgetting to beg Pardon and Charity for our Enemies, and Protection against them.

We are not to rely on a single Prayer in Matters of great Concernment, but to make it as publick as we can, by obtaining of others to pray for us: This being the great Blessing of the Communion of Saints, that a Prayer united is strong, like a well-order'd Army, and God loves to be ty'd fast with such Cords of Love, and constrain'd by a holy Violence.

Every Time that is not seiz'd upon by some other Duty, is seasonable enough for Prayer, but let it be perform'd as a solemn Duty Morning and Evening; that God may begin and end all our Business, and the *Outgoing of the Morning and Evening may praise him:*

him: For so we bless God, and God blesses us. Yet ought we not to fail of taking other Opportunities to worship God at some other times of the Day; at least by Ejaculations and short Addresses, more or less, longer or shorter, solemnly or without Solemnity, privately or publickly, as you can or are permitted; always remembring, that as every *Sin* is a Degree of Danger and Unsafety, so every pious *Prayer* and well-employ'd Opportunity is a Degree of Return to Hope and Pardon.

A *Vow* to God is an Act of *Prayer*, a great Degree and Instance of Importunity, and an Increase of Duty by some new uncommanded Instance, or some more eminent Degree of Duty, or Frequency of Action, or Earnestness of Spirit in it. And because it has pleas'd God, in all Ages of the World, to admit of Intercourse with his Servants in the Matters of *Vows*, it is not ill Advice that we make Vows to God in such Cases, in which we have great Need or great Danger. In doing which we must observe the following Cautions.

That the matter of the *Vow* be lawful, that it be useful in order to *Religion* or *Charity*; that it be grave, not trifling and impertinent, but great in our Proposition of Duty towards the Blessing; that it be an uncommanded Instance, that is, that it be of something

something, or in some manner, or in some Degree to which formerly we were not oblig'd, or which we might have omitted without *Sin*; that it be done with Prudence, and be safe in all the Circumstances of Person, lest we beg a Blessing and fall into a Snare; that every *Vow* of a new Action be also accompany'd with a new Degree and Enforcement of our essential and unalterable Duty, such as was *Jacob's Vow*, that besides the Payment of a Tythe, *God should be his God*, that so he might strengthen his Duty to him first in Essentials and Precepts, and then in Additionals and Accidentals. For 'tis but an ill Tree that spends more in Leaves, Suckers and Gumms, than in Fruit; and that Thankfulness and Religion is best that first secures Duty, and then enlarges in Counsels. Therefore let every great *Prayer*, and great Need, and great Danger, draw us nearer to God, by the Approach of a pious Purpose to live more strictly.

And let every Mercy of God, answering that *Prayer*, produce a real Performance of it. Let not young Beginners in Religion enlarge their Debts, and straighten their Liberty, by Vows of long Continuance; nor indeed any one else, without a great Experience of himself, and of all accidental Dangers. *Vows* of single Actions are safest, and proportionable to those single Blessings,
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ever begg'd in such Cases of sudden and transient Importunities. No Action which is *Matter of Question and Dispute in Religion*, shou'd ever become the *Matter of a Vow*. He *vows* foolishly, that promises to God to live and die in such an Opinion, in an Article not necessary nor certain; or that upon Confidence of his present Guide, binds himself for ever to the Profession of what he may afterwards more reasonably contradict, or may find not to be useful, or not profitable, but of some Danger or of no Necessity. Solemn Promises to God, of new and better Obedience, will be great Helps to keep the Will in awe; and Christians, by such salutary Vows, may avoid the falling into Errors and Snares, which they might not have escap'd, had not they been beforehand so guarded against them.

Because even the Duty of *Prayer* has in it some special *Temptations*, 'tis necessary that we be arm'd by special *Remedies* against them: The Dangers are *wandring Thoughts* and *Tediousness of Spirit*.

If we feel our Spirits apt to wander in our *Prayers*, and to retire into the World, or to things unprofitable, or vain and impertinent, we must use *Prayer* to be assisted in *Prayer*, for a sober, fix'd, and recollected Spirit: And when to this you add a moral Industry to be steady in your Thoughts,
whatever

whatever Wandrings, after this, return irremediably, are a Misery of Nature and an Imperfection, but no Sin, while it is not cherish'd and indulg'd.

In private it is not amiss to attempt the Cure, by reducing our *Prayers* into short Forms, making voluntary Interruptions, and beginning again, that the want of Spirit and Breath may be supply'd by the short Stages and Periods.

When we have observ'd any considerable Wanderings of our Thoughts, we ought to bind our selves to repeat that *Prayer* with actual Attention, or else revolve the full Sense of it in our Spirit, and repeat it in all the Effects and Desires of it: And possibly the Tempter may be driven away with his own Art, and may cease to interpose his Trifles when he perceives they do but vex the Person into Carefulness and Piety, and yet he loses nothing of his Devotion, but doubles the Earnestness of his Care. If this be not seasonable or opportune, or adapted to any Man's Circumstances, yet be sure with actual Attention to say a hearty *Amen* to the whole *Prayer*, with one united Desire, earnestly begging the Grace mention'd in the *Prayer*; for that Desire does the great Work of the *Prayer*, and secures the Blessing, if the wandering Thoughts were against our Will, and disclaimed by contending against them. We

We can never pray fervently, frequently, and as we ought to do, unless we avoid Multiplicity of worldly Affairs; and in those that are unavoidable, labour for an Evenness and Tranquillity of Spirit, that we may be untroubled and smooth in all Tempests of Fortune. By this means *Religion* will be better tended by us, when we are not torn to pieces with the Cares of the World, and seiz'd upon with low Affections, Passions and Interests.

It helps much to Attention in our *Prayers*, if we say them silently, without the Voice, only by the Spirit: For in mental *Prayers*, if our Thoughts wander, we only stand still; when our Minds return, we go on again; there is none of the *Prayer* lost, as it is if our Mouths speak, and our Hearts wander.

To incite us to the Use of these, or any other Counsels that may be given us, we must remember that it is a great Indecency to desire of God to hear those *Prayers*, a great part of which we do not hear ourselves: If they be not worthy of our Attention, they are far more unworthy of God's.

The other Temptation in Prayer is *Tediousness of Spirit*, or a Weariness of the Employment; like that of the *Jews*, who complain'd that they were weary of the *New Moons*, and their Souls loath'd the frequent Returns of their *Sabbaths*. So do many
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Christians now, who pray without Fervour and Earnestness of Spirit, meditate but seldom, and that without Fruit, or Sense, or Affection; who seldom examine their Consciences, and when they do it, they do it but sleepily, slightly, without Compunction, or hearty Purpose, or Fruits of Amendment; they enlarge themselves in the Thoughts and Fruition of temporal things, running for Comfort to them only in any Sadness and Misfortune; they love not to frequent the Sacraments, nor any the Instruments of Religion, as Sermons, Publick *Prayers*, Fastings, and the like, but love Ease, and a loose undisciplin'd Life; they obey not their Superiors, but follow their own Judgment when their Judgment follows their Affections, and their Affections follow Sense and worldly Pleasures; they neglect, or dissemble, or defer, or do not attend to the Motions and Inclinations to Virtue, which the Spirit of God puts into their Soul; they repent them of their *Vows* and holy Purposes, not because they discover any Indiscretion in them, or intolerable Inconvenience, but because they bring with them Labour, which, as the Case now stands, they are displeas'd at. They content themselves with the first Degrees and necessary Parts of Virtue, and when they are arriv'd thither, they sit down as if they were come to the Mountain

tain of the Lord, and are not to proceed on to Perfection. They enquire into all Cases in which it may be lawful to omit a Duty, and tho' they will not do less than they are bound to, yet they will do no more than needs must; for what they do is out of Fear and Self-Love, not out of the Love of God, or the Spirit of Holiness and Zeal: The Event of which will be this, He who will do no more than needs must, will soon be brought to omit something of his Duty, and will be apt to believe less to be necessary than is.

The Remedies against this Temptation are these: We must order our private Devotions so, that they become not Arguments and Causes of Tedioufness by their indiscreet Length. Let us reduce our Words into a narrow Compass, still keeping all the Matter, and what is cut off in the length of our *Prayers* we shou'd supply in the Earnestness of our Spirit. For so nothing is lost, while the Words are chang'd into Matter, and length of Time into Fervency of Devotion, the Forms are made not the less perfect, and the Spirit is more, and the Scruple is remov'd.

It is not imprudent if we provide Variety of Forms of *Prayer* to the same Purposes: If we find not our Spirits in Frame to call upon God with apt Petitions, as sudden and necessary Occasions require, the Change, by consulting with the Appetites of Fancy, may

may better entertain the Spirit; but doubtless those *Prayers* are most acceptable to God, where the Heart is wholly engag'd of itself, and needs not the Assistance of Fancy, or any outward Helps. However, we may sometimes be pleas'd to recite a *Hymn*, when a *Prayer*, tho' never so short, wou'd seem flat and unpleasant to us. The Soul may be more inclin'd to be transported with *Praises* than to content itself with *Prayer*: We may be more willing to *sing* than to *say*, or to *sing this* rather than *that*. Certain we are, Variety is delightful, and whether that be natural to us, or an Imperfection, yet if it be comply'd with, it may remove some part of the Temptation.

We shou'd break our Office and Devotion into Fragments, and make frequent Returnings by Ejaculations and abrupt Inter-courses with God; for so no length can offend our Tenderness and Fickleness of Spirit; and by often praying in such a manner, and in all Circumstances, we shall habituate our Souls to *Prayer*, by making it the Business of many less Portions of our Time, and by thrusting it in between all our other Employments, it will make every thing of Religion relish, and by Degrees turn all into its Nature.

We must learn to abstract our Thoughts and Desires from Pleasures and Things of
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this World. For nothing is a direct Cure to this Evil, but cutting off all other Loves and Adherences. We are to order our Affairs so, that Religion may be propounded to us as a Reward, and Prayer as our Defence, and holy Action as our Security, and Charity and good Works as our Treasure. Let us consider that all things else are Satisfaction but to the brutish part of a Man, and that these are the Refreshments and Relishes of that noble Part by which we are better than Beasts; and whatever other Instrument, Exercise or Consideration, is of use to take our Loves from the World, the same is apt to place them upon God.

Let us not seek for Delicousness or sensible Consolations in the Actions of Religion, but only regard the Duty and Conscience of it. For tho' in the beginning most frequently, and at some other times, God complies with our Infirmities, and encourages our Duty with little overflowings of spiritual Joy, and sensible Pleasure and Delicacies in Prayer, insomuch that we seem to feel some little Foretaste of Heaven, and great Refreshments from the Spirit of Consolation; yet this is not always safe for us to crave, neither to expect and look for, for when we are disappointed, 'tis apt to make us cool in our Enquiries, and waitings upon Christ, when we want them. It is a running

ning after him not for the *Miracles* but for the *Loaves*, not for the wonderful things of God, and the Desires of pleasing him, but for the Pleasure of pleasing our selves. And as we must not judge our Devotion to be barren and unfruitful, when we want the overflowings of Joy, so neither must we cease for want of them. If our *Spirits* can serve God willingly and readily, out of pure Conscience of our Duty, it is better in itself and more safe to us.

Let us use to soften our Souls with frequent Meditation upon sad and dolorous Objects, as of Death, the Terrors of the Day of Judgment, fearful Judgments upon great *Sinners*, strange horrid Accidents, Fear of God's Wrath, the Pains of Hell, the unspeakable Amazements of the Damn'd, the intolerable Load of a sad Eternity. For whatever creates Fear, or makes the Spirit dwell in a religious Sadness, is apt to melt it, and render it devout and pleasant to any part of Duty. For a great Fear, when it is ill manag'd, is the Parent of Superstition, but a discreet and well-grounded Fear produces Religion.

Pray often, and you shall *pray* oftner, and when you are accusom'd to a frequent Devotion, it will so insensibly unite to your Nature and Affections, that it will become a trouble to you to omit your usual or appointed

Prayers, and what you obtain at first, by doing Violence to your Inclinations, at last will not be left without as great unwillingness, as that by which at first it enter'd. This *Rule* relies not only upon *Reason* deriv'd from the Nature of Habits, which turn into a second Nature, and make their Actions easy, frequent and delightful; but it relies upon a Reason depending upon the Nature and Constitution of Grace, whose Productions are of the same Nature with the Parent, and encreases it self, naturally growing from Grains into huge Trees, from Minutes to vast Proportions, and from Moments to Eternity. But be sure not to omit your usual *Prayers* without great Reason, (even tho' it might be done without Sin) because having often omitted something, in a little while you will be past the Scruple of that, and begin to be tempted to leave out more: Keep your self up to your usual Forms and Length, you may enlarge when you will, but do not contract or lessen them without a very weighty Reason.

Let a Man frequently and seriously, by Imagination, place himself upon his Death-bed, and consider what great Joy he shall have for the remembrance of every Day well spent, and what then he wou'd give, that he had so spent all his Days; he may guess at it by Proportions, for it is certain he shall have

a joyful and prosperous Night, who has spent his Days holily, and he resigns his Soul with Peace into the Hands of God, who has liv'd in the Peace of God, and the Works of Religion in his life-time. This Consideration is of a real Event, it is of a thing that will certainly come to pass; *It is appointed for all Men once to die, and after Death comes Judgment*, the Apprehension of which is dreadful, and the Presence of it is intolerable, unless by Religion and Sanctity we are dispos'd for so venerable an Appearance.

Here it may be useful, that we consider the easiness of Christ's Yoke, the Excellencies and Sweetness that are in Religion, the Peace of Conscience, the Joy of the Holy Ghost, the rejoycing in God; the Simplicity and Pleasure of Virtue, the *Intricacy*, *Trouble* and *Vileness* of *Sin*; the *Blessing* and *Health* and *Reward* of *that*; the *Curses*, the *Sicknesses* and sad Consequences of this; and that if we are weary of the Labours of Religion, we must eternally sit still and do nothing; for whatever we do contrary to it, is infinitely more full of Labour, Care, Difficulty and Vexation.

Consider this also, that *tediousness* of Spirit is the beginning of the most dangerous Condition and Estate in the whole World; for 'tis a great Disposition to the Sin against

the Holy Ghost; it is apt to bring a Man to Back-sliding, and the State of Un-regeneration, to make him return to his Vomit and his Sink, and either to make him impatient, or his Mind scrupulous, dissatisfy'd, irksome and desperate; *It is better that he had never known the way of Godliness, than after the Knowledge of it, that he should fall away.* There is not in the World a greater Sign that the Spirit of Reprobation is beginning upon a Man, than when he is habitually and constantly, or frequently weary, and flights or loaths holy Offices.

The last Remedy which preserves the Hope of such a Man, and can reduce him to the State of Zeal, and the Love of God, is a pungent, sad and heavy Affliction; not desperate, but recreated with some intervals of Kindness or little Comforts, or entertain'd with Hopes of Deliverance; which Condition, if a Man shall fall into, by the Grace of God he is likely to recover; but if this help him not, it is infinite odds but he will *quench the Spirit.*

But to speak a little more particularly of this great Duty of *Prayer*, which is, as has been said, a speaking to God, and in which there are several Parts, according to the different things about which we speak.

The first is *Confession*, and acknowledging our *Sins* to God, whether we only con-

feels in gross, as we are sinful, or mention the several sorts and Acts of our *Sin*; the former is necessary, and to be always a part of our solemn *Prayers*, whether *publick* or *private*, the latter is proper for private *Prayer*, and there the oftner 'tis us'd, the better. In our daily private *Prayer*, 'twill be fit constantly to remember some of our greatest and foulest Sins, tho' never so long since past; for such we shou'd never think sufficiently confess'd and bewail'd: This bewailing must always go along with Confession, we must be heartily sorry for the Sin we confess, and from our Souls acknowledge our own great unworthiness in having committed them; for our *Confession* is not intended to instruct God, who knows our Sins much better than we our selves do, but it is to humble our selves; and therefore we must think we have not *confess'd* aright till that be done.

Petition is the second part of *Prayer*, and the begging of God, whatever we want for our *Souls* or *Bodies*; for our Souls we must first beg Pardon of our Sins, and that for the sake of Jesus Christ, who shed his Blood to obtain it; we must then beg the Grace and Assistance of God's Spirit to enable us to forsake our Sins, and to walk in Obedience to him: for our Bodies we are also to pray, and to ask of God the Necessaries and Conveniences of Life.

Deprecating is another part of *Prayer*, in which we pray to God to turn away some Evil from us, as the Evil of Sins, and the Evil of Punishment, both Temporal and Eternal: We have already spoken sufficiently of *Intercession*, *Thanksgiving*, and the other parts of *Prayer*, and shall proceed now to shew what Miscarriages good Christians may fall into by the Neglect of this Duty, and that it is as much their Interest as their Duty.

'Twas the Observation that *Origen* made of himself, that the Day in which he so shamefully fell by sacrificing to *Idols*, he had ventur'd out in the Morning before he had compleated his usual *Prayers*; the *Devil* finding him so unarm'd, took the Advantage to assault him, as knowing he had then but a single impotent Man to wrestle with, who had forfeited (by not invoking) the *Protection* of God: And indeed, since *Prayer* is the most powerful Exorcism to eject him, we may well conclude, the Omission of it is a likely means to invite him; for if God has not the Prepossession, if we do not by hearty *Prayer* surrender our Souls to him in the *Morning*; they are then all the Day after like that empty House in the Gospel, a fit *Receptacle* for as many evil Spirits to inhabit there. Nor are these *Spiritual* the only *Dangers* that attend us, we are liable to a multitude

tude of *secular* ones also: Our Persons, our Fortunes, our Reputation, every thing wherein we can receive a Benefit, renders us equally capable of a Prejudice; and she that fears not to fall into *Sin*, will yet fear the tumbling into a *Precipice*; and tho' she cares not for the spotting of her Innocence, wou'd be very loath any Accident shou'd blemish her Face, disparage her Fame, or impoverish her Fortune; and yet from any, or all of these, she is utterly unable to guard her self. Thus if *Piety* will not, yet *Interest* methinks shou'd render her an *Homager* to that Omnipotent Power, from whence alone she can derive her Safety.

I wish I cou'd say, that this Duty is never easily shaken off; but I fear there are some of those I now speak of, who neglect it in spite of all these Inducements, who tho' they can pretend nothing serious enough to own the name of Business, do yet suffer a Succession of I know not what Impertinencies to divert them: Indeed, were the Expence of some *Ladies* Days calculated, we shou'd find every Hour so full of Emptiness, so over-laden with Vanities, that 'tis scarce imaginable where an Office of *Devotion* shou'd croud in.

The *Morning* is divided between *Sleep* and *Dressing*, nor wou'd the *Morning* suffice, but that they are fain to make a new Computation to measure it, not by the *Sun*, but

by the time of *dining*, which is often as late as the *Stationary* Hours of the *Primitive Fasts*, tho' upon a far different Motive. The *Afternoon* being by this means reduc'd, is too short for those many Divertisements that wait them, and must therefore borrow as much of the *Night* as they lent to the *Morning*; and when the mere Fatigue of Pleasures sends a *Lady* to her Rest, 'tis not imaginable that she will admit *Devotion*, to induce yet greater and more disagreeable Weariness. Thus the whole *Round* of her Life seems to be a kind of *Magick Circle*, in which nothing that is *Holy* will appear: Indeed 'tis one of the highest *Stratagems* of Satan, thus to forestal their Time, and by a perpetual Supply of Diversions, insensibly steal from them the Opportunities of divine Offices, an Artifice by which he prevails on some who wou'd startle at his grosser and more apparent Temptations.

If this habitual Neglect of Piety shou'd not end at last in great and criminal Commissions, as 'tis naturally very apt to do, yet his Interest is sufficiently serv'd by such a customary Omission, which amounts to no less than the living *without God in the World*; a State so hopeless, that when the Apostle recollects to the *Ephefians* the wretchedness of the *Gentile* State, he does it in these very Words; and sure those that live under *Christianity*

stianity are not in a better but worse Condition, by how much *Contempt of God* is more unpardonable than *Ignorance*.

'Tis of infinite Concern therefore to those who are in Danger of so fatal a Snare, to look about them, and endeavour to counter-mine *Satan*, and be as industrious to secure their Duty, as he to supplant it; a very useful Expedient to this Purpose, is to be afore-hand with him, I mean to make their Devotions the first Business of the Day, by which are intended, not only those *Ejaculations* wherewith we shou'd all open our Eyes, but their more set and solemn *Prayers*. If this be not done 'till some *Ladies Dressings* be finish'd, 'twill be a half Mockery, and a most preposterous Request as to the greatest part of the Day, which will be past before: and besides the Absurdity, there is Danger in it, for all the preceding Time is, as it were, *out-law'd* by it, and from under the divine Protection. Are God's *Safe-guards* to shine out only with the Noon-day *Sun*? Do they suppose the Devil keeps their Hours, and stirs not abroad 'till the *Afternoon*, that there is no Danger of corporal or spiritual Mischiefs before that time of the Day? Certainly if the noise of the *Harp* and the *Viol* does not drown it, they may hear a Morning as well as Evening *Pas-sing-Bell*. With how many others does the

Glass of Life run out, while they are at their *Looking-glasses*? and yet what Tenure have they in the safety of one Moment? What rational Expectation can they have of that, when they do not invoke it? nor are the *spiritual* Dangers less than the *corporal*, but rather much more; and they must be very slight Observers of themselves, if they do not discern that Snares may be laid for them in their Recesses in their Chambers, as well as in Places of the most publick Resort. Indeed were there no other than what relates to their *Dress* and its Curiosity, it were enough to evidence their Danger; scarce any part of that, but a Temptation is in it to *Pride*, if it hits right and pleases their *Fancy*; to *Anger* and *Vexation* if it does not: They had need for this Reason to put on their *Armour* before their *Ornaments*, by a Prepossession of *Prayer* and *Meditation*, to secure their *Vitals*, lest by an internal *Death* of *Grace*, their Bodies in their utmost Lustre prove but the painted *Sepulchre* of their *Souls*.

How inverted an Estimate do they make of things, who postpone the Interests of their *Souls* to the meanest of their *Bodies*, pay a supererrogating Attendance to the one, before the other comes at all into their Care? But what is yet worse, how vile a Contumely is offer'd to the Majesty of God, who is us'd as they do their dunning Creditors,

ditors, posted off with an Excuse of no leisure yet to speak to him, while in the mean time, all the *Factors* for their Vanity can have ready, free, and full Audience? God must attend 'till their *Tailors* or their *Shoe-maker* please to dismiss them, and at the last can be allow'd only to bring up the Rear of a whole shoal of *Artificers*.

'Tis very doubtful whether he shall obtain so much as that from them, for it may often happen that he shall be quite precluded; so numerous are the parts of a modish Equipage, and so exact a Symmetry is requir'd in the whole, that 'tis the Business of many Hours to compleat it: when (as 'twas said of the *Roman Ladies*) a Council is call'd about the placing of a Hair that sits irregularly: When one thing after another shall be try'd, and again rejected, as not exact or not becoming, *Time* all the while insensibly steals away, and tho' that will not stay for them, yet *Dinner* does, and their *Bellies* begin to murmur to pay any longer Attendance on their *Backs*, and claim the next turn: Between these two Competitors 'tis odds but *Devotion* will quite be excluded, or reduc'd only to a *Grace* before *Meat*, (and well if that) considering how unfashionable 'tis grown. In the mean time, what a wretched *Improvvidence* is it, to reduce the one necessary

sary Business of the Day to such Uncertainties, nay, almost to a certain Disappointment?

Suppose this Hazard was only imaginary, and a Lady were infallibly sure not to lose the time for her *Prayers*, yet she will be likely by such preceding Diversions to lose so much of her Zeal in them, that if they be said at all, they will scarce be said in a due manner. There is, alas! such a Repugnancy in our Nature to any thing *spiritual*, that we cannot close in an instant; but as a benumm'd frozen Body will need some rubbing and chafing before it can be fit for Motion, so our more frozen Souls require some previous Incitations before they can with any Vigour exert themselves in *Devotion*. Now sure such a Dressing time as we have been speaking of, which is too common among the Ladies, is not very proper for such Preparations; 'tis the contrary, extremely apt to indispose and unfit them, for when the Fancy is possess'd with so many little Images of Vanity, they will not easily be ejected; that ranging Faculty is, God knows, too apt to bring in even the remotest Diversions; but when it has such a Stock ready at hand, how will it pour them in upon the Mind, so the great allaying, if not utter extinguishing of Devotion!

When all these Considerations are put together, 'twill sure appear wholesome Counsel, that such Persons shou'd not trust so important

portant a Duty to so many Casualties, but in the first Place secure a time for that; Repair to their *Oratory* before their *Dressing-Room*, and by an early Consecration of themselves to God, defeat Satan's Claims, and discourage his Attempts for the rest of the Day. We know there is anatural Efficacy in a good *Beginning* toward producing a good *Ending*; but in spiritual things the Influence is yet greater, because it draws in Auxiliaries from above, and engages the yet farther Assistances of Grace, upon which account one may reasonably believe, that where this Duty is perform'd in the *Morning*, it will not be totally neglected in the succeeding Parts of the Day; 'twill be easie to discern the same Obligation, the same Advantage of *closing* the Day with God, that there was to begin it; and when those two Boundaries are secur'd, when those are look'd upon as strict Duty, and constantly observ'd, 'tis not unlikely but their Piety may grow generous, and with *David*, add to the *Evening and Morning a Noon-day Office*. Devotion being advanced thus far, will probably go farther, and not keep itself only on the *defensive* Part, but invade its Opposites, get daily Ground of those Vanities by which it was before oppress'd; for when a Lady has, in her Closet, wash'd her Cheeks with penitential Tears, she cannot, when she comes out, think them prepar'd

prepar'd for the Varnish of the *Paint* and *Fucus*; when she has attentively examin'd her Conscience, that impartial *Mirror*, and there discern'd all the Blemishes of her nobler Part, she will with somewhat a more cold Concern consult her *Looking-glass*, and when she has by pious Vows and Resolutions *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, 'twill be impossible for her to be very anxiously careful about her Garments. This devout Temper of her Mind will not let her dream away her Time in fantastick Scenes, and elaborate nothing, but prompt her to *give all Diligence to make her Calling and Election sure*. In a word, when she once understands what it is to spend an Hour devoutly, she will endeavour to rescue all the rest from Trifles and impertinent Entertainments, and employ them to Purposes more worthy the great end of her Being.

But *private* Devotion, tho' of excellent Effect, cannot commute for the Omission of *publick*, nor indeed can it long maintain its Vigour, unless sometimes cherish'd by the warmth of Christian *Assemblies*; and if God pleases to *visit* them in their Closets, they are ever by their own rules of Civility, oblig'd to return *Visits*, and attend him in his *House*: 'Tis to be fear'd, too many adapt the Instance in the Formality too, and come as unconcernedly to him, as they do to one another; 'tis true, those that pay him a cordial Reverence

at

at *home*, will certainly do it at the *Church*; and therefore by the little we see perform'd by some there, we may fear, God sees as little in their *Retirements*. But what do we speak of a hearty Reverence, when 'tis visible that there are those who pay none at all? How rare a Sight is it for some Ladies to appear at *Church*? How many times (one may almost say hundreds) do we see their Coaches at the *Play-house*, for once at God's? They seem to own no distinction of Days, unless it be, that *Sunday* is their most vacant Season to take *Physick*, or to lie a-bed; and if such do ever come to *Church*, Devotion is like to be the least of their Errand; some new Garment perhaps, or Dress is to be shew'd, and that thought the Place where the most critical Judges of these things will be most at leisure to observe them; or if they come not to *teach* new Fashions, it may be they come to *learn*, and such *Documents* will be surer to be put in Practice, than any in the *Sermon*; possibly they expect to see some Friend or Acquaintance there, and as if Christ were to be serv'd as he was born, in an *Inn*, make his *House* the common Rendezvous in which to meet their Associate: If they have any more ingenious Attractive, 'tis commonly that of *Curiosity*, to hear some new celebrated *Preacher*, and that rather for his *Rhetorick* than his *Divinity*; and this Motive, tho' the best of the Sett, is but like that
which

which prevail'd with the *Jews*, who came to *Jesus* that they might see *Lazarus*.

We shall not reckon among these Motives, that of *Hypocrisie* and seeming Holiness, for from that all the rest do acquit them. This is the only Sin which this Age has seem'd to reform, and that too not by the Virtue, but the Iniquity of the Times. *Religion* is grown so unfashionable, so contemptible, that none can be now tempted to put on so ridiculous a Disguise: Tho' as to *single* Persons, I confess *Hypocrisie* one of the deepest Guilts, such as has a peculiar Portion assign'd to it by *Christ*, in the Place of Torment; yet as to *Communities*, I cannot but think it better to have a Face of *Religion* than *Profaneness*: the Example of the former may work beyond it self, and a *Form* of Godliness in some, may produce the Power of it in others; but a Pattern of *Profaneness*, the farther it operates, the worse, and all the Progress it can make, is from one Wickedness to another: 'tis to be fear'd, that as *St. Bernard* wish'd for his Fever again, so the Church may ere long for her *Hypocrites*.

Let us now enquire a little, how those whom the foremention'd Motives bring to the *publick Worship*, behave themselves at it; and that is indeed with great Conformity to the Ends of their Coming; their Errand is not to be Suppliants, neither do they put them-

themselves in the Posture: Kneeling is impertinent for them, who mean not to pray; but as the Apostle describes the idolatrous Service of the *Israelites*, *They sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*; so these sit down to talk and laugh with their Pew-fellows, and rise up to gape and look about them. When they shou'd be confessing their Sins to Almighty God, they are apologizing perhaps to one another for the Omission of a ceremonious Visit, or some other Breach of Civility: When they shou'd be *observing the Goings of God* in the Sanctuary, they are enquiring when this *Lady* comes to Town, or when that goes out. Nay, probably the *Theatre* is brought into the *Temple*; the last Play they saw is recollected, and Quotations enough brought from thence to vie with the Preacher. 'Tis well if they do not hum an Air of the *Opera*, instead of a Psalm of *David*. It is impossible to reckon up all their *Topicks* of Discourse, and all their *Church Amusements*: Indeed it were scandalous for one that reproves them, to pretend to know by how many Impertinencies, not to say worse, they profane that holy Place and Time.

But that All-seeing *Eye*, in whose Presence they are, keeps an exact Account, and will charge them not only with the *Principal* but the *Product*; not only with their own Irreverences, but with those which by their Example

ample or Encouragement they have occasion'd in others; nay, farther, even with that Scandal which redounds to *Christianity* by it. For when one that is to chuse a *Religion*, shall read the Precepts of *Pythagoras*, enjoining that the Gods must not be worship'd in passing by as it were accidentally, but with the greatest Solemnity and Intention: When he shall consider the Care of *Numa* in instituting Officers, who at *Sacrifices* and all Divine Services, shou'd call upon the People to keep Silence and mind their Devotion; or even the Practice of the present *Mahometans*, who permit none to sit in their *Mosques*, nor to pray without *Prostration*: When, I say, this is consider'd, and compar'd with the scandalous Indecency observ'd in our Churches, he will certainly exclude *Christianity* from all Competition in his Choice, not allow it the Name of Religion, whose very *Worship* appears so profane, and whose *Votaries* mock the God they pretend to serve.

Yet however severe the Charge may be against some, I am far from including all under it. There are many *Ladies*, whose Examples are Reproaches to the other Sex, that help to fill our *Congregations* when *Gentlemen* desert them. We have had in *England* a Royal Example of Christian Devotion, whose Behaviour at Church was so devout, so humble, so zealous, that she adorn'd the Religion she profess'd,

profess'd, and now wears the Crown of Glory in Heaven, which is the sure Reward of all that so live and so die as she did. Tho' her Train was never failing, she wou'd be constant at Divine Service: And such shining, such exemplary Piety, cou'd not but bring Religion into repute again with those, who think it becomes them to do every thing in Imitation of the Court. The Zeal, the Worship of such may probably be too affected, but there are not wanting Ladies of the highest Rank, who condemn the impertinent Trifles of the Toilet, and the vain Employments of their Sex in the Morning, making it the first Business of the Day to seek God with Prayers and Praise in their Closets, and the next to pay him their Homage in his own House. To these sometimes we alone owe, that our Churches are not furnish'd like the Feast in the Parable, out of the *High-ways and Hedges, with the Poor and the Maim'd, the Halt and the Blind*. Yet some of these too may be liable to some Irregularity, which may be the Effects of Inadvertency or Misperuasion, tho' not of Contempt or Profaneness.

In some 'tis observable, that tho' they come *constantly*, yet they come not *early*, by which means a considerable part of the *Prayers* is over, before they enter the *Church*. This causes Disturbance to others, the successive Entry of new Comers keeping the *Congregation*

tion in a continual Motion and Agitation; which how unagreeable it is to Devotion, *Numa*, a Pagan Prince may teach us. *Plutarch* tells us, he took a particular Care that in the time of Divine Worship, no *knocking, clapping*, or other Noise shou'd be heard; as well knowing how much the Operations of the Intellect are obstructed, by any thing that importunes the Senses. What wou'd he have said, shou'd he come into one of our City *Congregations*, where often during the whole time of *Prayer* the clapping of Pew Doors does out-noise the Reader?

But besides the Indecency of the thing, and the Interruption it gives to others, 'tis very injurious to themselves; a kind of partial Excommunication of their own inflicting, which excludes them from part of the Divine Offices, and from that part too which is of the most universal Concern, the *Confession* of their *Sins*; which the Wisdom of our Church has fitly plac'd in the Beginning of her Service, as a necessary Introduction to all the rest. And even in separate *Congregations*, the coming of People successively after Prayer is begun, distracts the Mind both of the Minister and his Auditory, shews a Negligence in those that do it, and gives Offence to those that see it. It will much better become them to anticipate the time, *to wait at the Posts of the Doors*, and contrive to be at the pub-

publick Worship before Prayer begins; that so by previous Recollection they may put their Minds in a fit Posture of *Address* at the publick Audience; which by the way speaks it to be no very laudable Custom which almost universally prevails, that those few who do come early, spend the Interval before Service in talking with one another, by which they do not only lose the Advantage of that time for Preparation, but convert it into the direct contrary, and thereby actually unfit and indispose themselves. Our Hearts in their most compos'd Temper, are too apt to create Diversions; we need not start Game for them to chase, and by prefacing ~~our~~ Prayers with *secular* Discourse, make room for the same Thoughts to return upon us in them. Besides, in relation to the Place, it has a Spice of Profaneness, 'tis the bringing the *Moabite* and *Ammonite* into the *Temple*; a kind of Invasion on God's Property, by introducing our worldly Concerns or Divertisements into the House which is call'd by his Name, solemnly dedicated to him, and therefore dedicated that it might be his Peculiar. We may to such, with a little Variation, apply the Expostulatory Reproof of the Apostle to the *Corinthians*, *What, have ye not Houses to talk and converse in, or despise ye the Church of Ggd?* This, I confess, is a Reproof that will not reach to many, there being so few of the
Better-

Better-sort who come early enough to talk before Service. And as for those who talk at it, we have already rank'd them under another Class. Those fall not much short of that Degree of Profaneness, who come late only because they are loath to rise, or to abate any thing of the *Curiosity* of their *Dress*: For she who prefers her *Sloth* or *Vanity* before God's Service, is like, how decently soever she behaves herself, to give but an insignificant Attendance at it.

This may in many proceed from another Cause, which tho' less ill in their Intentions, is not so in respect either of its Unreasonableness or its Effects; and that is an unequal Estimate they make of the Parts of God's Service. Some are so very partial to the Sermon, that the *Prayers* seem, comparatively, despicable in their Eye: Sure these do not understand their Energy aright, and think that having them by *rote*, they need not pour forth their Hearts with them, as often as they are offer'd up to the Throne of Grace. If these can but come time enough before the Preacher begins, they think they have discharg'd the weightier part of the *Law*, and of their own Duty. This Misper-suasion, tho' it has too generally diffus'd it self thro' both *Sexes*, yet seems to have been very especially imbib'd by the *Female*. And besides the Evidence that *Sundays* give, the

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Week-days afford no less. Let there be a *Lecture*, tho' at the remotest part of the Town, 'what hurrying is there to it? but let the Bell toll never so loud for the Canonical Hours of *Common Prayer*, 'twill not call the nearest of the Neighbourhood. Now God certainly intends *Harmony* in all sacred Ordinances, and wou'd not have one part set up against another, but mutually assist each others Operation upon us. Thus *Prayer* disposes us to receive Benefit by *Preaching*, and *Preaching* teaches us how to pray aright; and God grant we may long enjoy the Opportunities of both: That *Popery* may never swallow up *Preaching* in a Sleep of superstitious Orisons, nor *Fanaticism* break in upon *Divine Service*, with tedious Lectures of Enthusiasm and Impertinence. Since this Age has brought *Prayer* and *Preaching* to a *Competition*, I must take leave to say, that if we come impartially to weigh them, the Balance will incline another way than it seems with many to do; and we shall find *Prayer* the more essential Part of Religion.

The End of *Preaching* is either to teach us what we know not, or excite us to practice what we already know. Now in relation to our being taught what we know not, I suppose there is a wide Difference between *Preaching* at the first *Promulgation* of the

the *Gospel*, and now. 'Twas then the only way of revealing to the World the whole Mystery of our Salvation; wherefore the Apostle's Inference was then irrefragable, *How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher?* But where Christianity is planted, and the *New Testament* receiv'd, we have therein the whole Doctrine of Christ. Nay, we have not only the Matter, but the very Form of many of those Sermons which Christ and his Apostles preach'd. Unless therefore we think them not sufficiently gifted, we cannot but acknowledge, we have in them ample Instruction, both for Faith and Manners; enough, as St. Paul says, *to make us wise unto Salvation*. And the reading of these being a considerable Part of our Church's Service, we have the most genuine *Preaching*, even before the Minister ascends the *Pulpit*. Besides, for the Help of those whose Youth or Incapacity disables them from making Collections thence for themselves, our Church has epitomiz'd the most necessary Points of Belief and Practice in the Catechism, not as the *Popish*, to preclude their farther Search, but to supply them in the interim, till they are qualify'd for it, and by that easie Infusion of *Christian Principles*, to secure them

of that Knowledge which is simply necessary to their Salvation.

Now certainly, to People in this State, *Preaching* is not of so absolute Necessity, in respect of Instruction, as it was for those, who from *Heathenism* and *Idolatry* were to be brought, first to the *Knowledge*, and then to the *Faith* of *Christ*. Thus we seem now to be more generally concern'd in the other End of *Preaching*, the exciting us to Practice. Alas! there are few of us who stumble on Sin for want of Light, but either thro' Heedlessness, or want of looking before us, or else by a wilful Prostration of our selves to it: Wherefore we often need to be rous'd out of our Negligence, to be frighted out of our Stubbornness; and by a close Application of those Truths we either forget or suppress, be animated to our Duty. To this End *Preaching* is doubtless of excellent use, and the nauseating of it shews a very sick Constitution of Mind; yet the over-greedy Desire may be a *Disease* also. He who eats more than he can concoct, does not so much assist as oppress Nature; and those that run from *Sermon* to *Sermon*, that allow themselves no time to *chew*, much less to *digest* what they hear, will sooner confound their *Brains* than mend their *Lives*. Often it betrays them to a very pernicious Delusion; it diverts them from many of the practical Parts of Piety, and

yet gives them a Confidence that they are extraordinarily Pious, and thro' their Belief that *Religion* consists principally in *hearing*, they forget to try themselves by that more infallible Text, the *doing God's Will*. Whereas God never design'd Preaching for more than a Guide in their Way, they make it their Way and their End too; and *Hearing* must, like a Circle, begin and terminate in it self.

We shou'd, in secular Concerns, think him a very unprofitable Servant, that after his Lord had given him Directions what to do, shou'd be so transported with hearing his Instructions, that he shou'd desire to have them infinitely repeated, and so spend the Time wherein he shou'd do the Work. And we have reason to think, God will make the same Judgment of those who do the like in his Service.

One wou'd now think, that this ravenous Appetite of *hearing* shou'd supersede all Niceness in it; yet we find it does not, but that some make a shift to be at once Voracious and Squeamish. If this spiritual Food be not artificially drest, 'tis too gross for their Palates. The Phrase must be *elegant*, the Words well *accented*; and the *inticing Words of Men's* Wisdom, which St. Paul disclaims in his *Preaching*, is that which they principally regard. The *Memory of the Preacher* becomes
often

often the most material Part of the *Sermon*, and the first Glance on his Book prejudices him. I need not add the Extravagancies of an uncouth Tone, a furious Vehemence or fantastick Gesture, in which the Soul and vital Efficacy of *Preaching* have been solemnly plac'd. Not that a decent Action is to be condemn'd: It being certain, that the lifeless, motionless Gesture of the generality of Preachers, is the Occasion that many of their Sermons miss of their intended Effect. But 'tis evident that all these Accomplishments are meer Trifles, and that those who insist so much on them, make *Preaching* much less Sacred and Divine than indeed it is. Therefore they cannot, without Absurdity, lay the main Stress of *Religion* upon it; or make that the highest of God's Ordinances, which owes all its Gratefulness with them to the Endowments of Men. Some may think I pursue this Subject too far. It is not however done with design to derogate from the just Respect due to *Preaching*; only I wou'd not have it monopolize our Esteem, or jostle out another Duty, which is of more constant Use and indispensable Necessity.

Such certainly is *Prayer*, that *Respiration* of the *Soul*, which is so necessary that it admits not of long Intermission; and for that Reason seems to carry the same Proportion to *hearing*, which *breathing* does to *eating*: We may make

long Intervals of *feeding* and yet subsist, but if we should do so in *breathing* we cannot recover it. *Prayer* is like the Morning and Evening *Sacrifice* under the *Law*, which God ordain'd should be *perpetual*; whereas *Preaching* is but like the *Reading* in the *Synagogues*, or *Sabbaths* and *Festivals*. However we have confounded the Terms, 'tis *Prayer* only that can properly be call'd the *Worship of God*; 'tis that by which we pay him his solemn *Honour*, acknowledge his Sovereignty and our own Dependence. When we *hear*, we do no more than what every *Disciple* does to his *Master*; but when we *pray*, we own him as the Spring and Source of all the Good we expect, as the Author of our Being and the Object of our Adoration. In a Word, we do by it profess him to be our God, it being an Impress of mere natural Religion to supplicate the *Deity* we acknowledge.

As by *Prayer* we render the greatest Honour to God, so also do we procure the greatest Advantages to our selves. *Prayer* is the powerful Engine by which we draw down Blessings, the Key which lets us in to the Immense Store-house of the Almighty, and that upon which the Efficacy of Preaching depends. It enlivens and animates our most sacred Actions.

God has promis'd his Spirit to none but those that ask it; accordingly in Scripture we find it still a concomitant in all Ecclesiastical Concerns.

cerns. Our blessed Saviour himself, tho' he *knew what was in Man*, and needed no Guide but his own Omniscience in his Choice, yet we find that before his Election of the Twelve Apostles, he continu'd a whole Night in *Prayer*; which was doubtless to teach us how requisite *Prayer* is in all our important Concerns; which, like the Pillar of Cloud and Fire to the *Israelites*, is our best Convoy through the Wilderness, thro' all the Snares and Temptations, thro' all the Calamities and Distresses of this World, and our most infallible Guide to the Land of Promise.

When all these are the Properties of *Prayer*, tho' private, they will not less belong to the *Publick*. Such a Conspiracy and Union of importunate *Devotion*, must have a proportionable Increase in its Effect. And if Heaven can suffer Violence by the Fervour of one single Votary, with what Storms, what Batteries will it be forced by a numerous Congregation? We find the Church is by *Christ* compar'd to an *Army with Banners*, but sure never is this Army in so good *Array*, in so invincible a Posture as upon its Knees. Ecclesiastical History tells us of a *Legion of Christians* in *Aurelius's* Camp, who in that Posture discomfited two *Assailants* at once, the *Enemy* and the *Drought*: That *Breath* which they sent up in *Prayers*, like a kindly Exhalation

return'd in Rain, and reliev'd the perishing Army. And had we but the same Fervour, and the same Innocency, cou'd we lift up as pure Hands as they did, there wou'd be no Blessing beyond our reach; but the less any of us find our selves so qualify'd, the more need we have to put our selves among those that are.

There is an happy *Contagion* in Goodness; we may perhaps be kindled like green Wood by the neighb'ring Flame; the Example of another's Zeal may awaken mine; however there is some Advantage in being in the Company; those Showers of Benediction which their Prayers bring down, are so plentiful, that some Drops at least may scatter upon those about them. From all these Considerations, the Necessity and Benefit of *publick Prayer* cannot but be made evident, and consequently the unreasonable-ness of those, who upon any pretence neglect it; and it is a farther incitement to it, that by our *sincere* and *honest Prayers*, we are sure to obtain *Strength* and *Assistance* from God, to enable us to vanquish and subdue our *Lusts*, he having promis'd to give his holy Spirit to every one that asks it. Besides this, by a constant and serious *Devotion*, our Hearts will be fill'd with such an over-awing Sense of God, than in all our Actions we shall *dread* and *revere* his Authority, and be ready to tremble at every Thought of offending him; for there

is nothing gives us such a *quick* Sense of God as *Prayer*, that being the most immediate Address that we can make to him, and the highest Elevation of our Souls towards him; for we are a sort of Beings that are akin to two Worlds, being plac'd in the middle between *Heaven* and *Earth*, as the common Center in which these distant Regions meet: By our superior Faculties, we hold Communion with the *spiritual* World, and by our inferior, with the *corporeal* one; but to this *sensible* or *corporeal* World, we lie open and bare, all its Objects being present to us, and striking immediately on our Senses; whereas, between us and the *spiritual* World, there is a Cloud of sensible things which interrupt our Prospect of the clear Heaven above them. Thus, before we can perceive that which is *divine*, we must remove this World out of the way, and withdraw our Souls from those Thoughts and Desires, in which these lower things have entangled them, that so we may lie open to the *heavenly Light*, and our cold Affections may be immediately expos'd to the enlivening Warmths of the *Sun of Righteousness*. From hence arises the Necessity of holy *Meditations* and devout *Prayers*, the one being necessary to abstract our Minds from the Objects of *corporeal* Sense, and the other to inspire our Affections with the love of those things which are above; by the one we are

dispos'd in our Minds, and by the other in our Choice of the better World; for *Prayer* does naturally sublimate our gross and earthly *Passions*, and by keeping our Minds intent upon God, it wings our Affections towards him, and animates them with divine Fires; we never rise from our Knees, after a devout Address to God, without deriving a magnetick Virtue from him, and being sensibly touch'd with his Charms and Attractions; if therefore we do but inure our selves to fervent *Prayer*, these holy Affections which we shou'd suck in with our Devotions, wou'd be instrumental to extinguish our vitious Inclinations, and we shou'd go every Day to the Throne of *Grace*, with such a lively Sense of God, and such a vigorous Relish of divine things, as wou'd be sufficient to antidote us all against the Venom of any single Contagion. If we are in good earnest, and seriously intend the Mortification of our Lusts, let us every Day, before we go into the World, be seasoning of our Minds with holy Devotions, and while we are addressing to God in the devout Sense of his unbounded Perfections, and of our Dependence upon him, let us pour out our Souls before him, and make an hearty Oblation of our Souls and Bodies to him: let us offer up our Wills to him broken and contrite, that he may put them into what Form and Posture he pleases; shew

shew him our Heart, that quits all Interest in itself, and that wou'd be only led and conducted by him; tell him, that you are sensible, that to morifie your Lusts, is far more difficult than to resolve to do it; and beseech him to enable you to be valiant in your *Actions*, as thro' his *Grace* you are already in your *Minds*; that you may with as much Certainty, if not with as much Ease, *do* and *effect*, as you have *projected* and *resolv'd*. And having implor'd his Aid, and sincerely offer'd up your selves to him, you have laid a strong Engagement upon him not to abandon you; he will never throw away a Heart that puts its self thus humbly into his Hands, nor suffer the *Devil* to make a *Prey* of that which has been so affectionately devoted to him. For it was by the concurrence of his Grace with our own *Faculties*, that this Resolution of Submission to him, was begotten in us, and can we think that the Father of Love will ever abandon his own Offspring while it cries out to him, and with pitiful and bemoaning Looks, implores his Aid and *Compassion*? Surely this cannot chuse but move his fatherly Bowels, and make them yern and turn towards it; and by a strong Sympathy draw his compassionate Arm to aid and relieve it. Let us therefore but faithfully use our own Endeavours, and fervently implore every Grace; and he will then never

suffer that divine Fire, which he has kindled within us, to be extinguish'd by our Corruptions, but will kindly cherish it with his own Influence, and touch it with a Ray darted from himself, till it has burn'd thro' all that Rubbish that oppresses it, and till it rises into a victorious *Flame*.

When we consider *Prayer* as a Part, as an Instrument of Holiness, and a Remedy against Temptation, what is there that a Christian shou'd more delight in the Exercise of, than in this heavenly Duty?

'Tis an Acknowledgment of God's being our God, a *Confession* of his Majesty and our Meanness, by a solemn Adoration and Worship of him; 'tis a Sacrifice of Praise to him; an Act of Humiliation, Repentance, Faith and Reliance upon him. We may hence infer, what Preparation of Soul is necessary to a right Discharge of this Duty. I shall not enter into a Debate of the Meanness and Excellence of a Form of *Prayer* above *Prayer extempore*. It is not to be question'd, that either of them coming from the Heart, will be acceptable to God. Those who are apt to fly into a rapturous Confusion, and rather take Delight in hearing themselves pray, or imagining that others delight to hear them, are certainly in the right to prevent that Temptation, by making use of a Form; and those who have more

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Command of their *Minds*, have more Seriousness and Calmness, as well as Sincerity of Spirit, will surely find great Relief in the judicious Composures of pious and learned Men; not that one wou'd discourage such, as under an Impatience of pouring out their whole Souls before God, express these holy Sentiments in their own Words, provided they do it with prudent as well as fervent Zeal.

Prayer is as well an *Instrument* as a *Part* of Holiness: It exercises all our Graces, and refreshes and improves them by Exercise. The Breathings of the Divine Spirit, which is in an extraordinary manner assistant in this holy Exercise, fill the Minds of Men with Joy, Peace and Hope, which confirm them in their Christian Warfare, and make them disrelish all the Pleasures of a sinful Life. But what can be a greater Encouragement to us in the Discharge of this Duty, than the extraordinary Promises annexed to it, of receiving whatever we ask with Faith? *Ask, and it shall be given to you.*

Prayer, as it is an *Antidote* against *Temptation*, possesses the Soul with an Awe of the Divine Majesty, with a Sense of his unspeakable Love, and with a Horror against Sin; while we enumerate his Benefits and our Sins, with all the aggravating Circumstances. And certainly no Man can be so senseless, as to repeat those Sins which he did
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just now bemoan and abhor, renounce and resolve against before God; nor will it be easy for him to fall, who comes forth forewarn'd, and arm'd to encounter a Temptation. *Prayer* also convinces a Man of the Loveliness and Happiness of a holy Life; for he finds that his Peace and Reliance grow up and decay together with his Virtue.

If we pray'd earnestly and often, how humble, how lowly, how heavenly and exalted wou'd our Souls be? With what glorious Notions of the Divine Majesty, What dreadful Apprehensions of Sin, What an unquenchable Thrift of Holiness, What Fears and Jealousies of the World and Flesh wou'd our Spirits be possess'd? And what a mighty Influence wou'd all this have upon our Conversation? How humbly, how warily, how uprightly shou'd we walk!

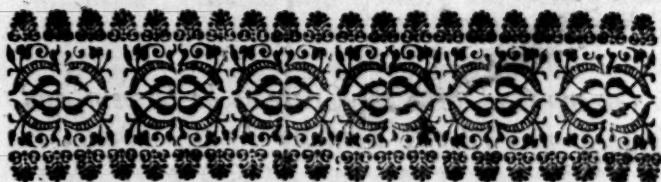
But when I do not pray often, or with this Care and Preparation, how lazy and careless is my Life? How dim and imperfect my Conceptions? How flat and tasteless my Relish of Spiritual things? How does a worldly sensual Temper grow and encrease upon me, and the divine Life within droop and languish?

Having said something of a Form of Prayer, and much more of the Duty and Necessity of Prayer, we shall close this Subject with a Petition to Almighty God, which may be of use

use both to us and our Readers, if said with a due Frame of Spirit.

Oh my God, give me Grace to be fervent and frequent in Prayer; assist me by thy Spirit, to dress and prepare my Soul for this more solemn Approach to thee; and then I shall experience this to be the High way of Commerce with Heaven. I shall feel the Wind blowing upon the Garden of my Heart, and the Spices flowing forth; I shall feel the Spirit fanning that Spark of holy Life till it be kindled into a Flame; and I shall feel my self transported, and ascending up above this vain World, and all the Allurements of it. Oh grant me therefore, oh my God, thy holy Spirit, that I may pray with Understanding and Fervency; that my Prayer may not be the Sacrifice of Fools, and turn'd into Sin, but an acceptable Sacrifice to thee, an Instrument of Holiness, and a Guard against Sin, exalting me to fight the good Fight of Faith, that I may receive an everlasting Crown: and all for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.





F A S T I N G.



I *Fasting* be consider'd in it self, without Relation to spiritual Ends, 'tis a Duty no where enjoin'd or advis'd; but Christianity has to do with it, as it may be an *Instrument* of the Spirit, by subduing the Lusts of the Flesh, or removing any Hindrance of Religion: And it has been practis'd by all Ages of the Church, and advis'd in order to *Prayer, Mortification of Bodily Lusts, and Repentance*. The Rules for the right practising this Duty are as follow: *Fasting*, in order to *Prayer*, is to be measur'd by the Proportion of the Times of *Prayer*; that is, it ought to be a total *Fast* from all things during the Solemnity, unless an unavoidable Necessity intervene. Thus the Jews eat nothing upon the Sabbath Day till their great Offices were perform'd, which was about the *Sixth Hour*; and St. *Peter*

ter us'd it as an Argument, that the Apostles in Pentecost were not drunk, because it was but the *Third Hour* of the Day, of such a Day in which it was not lawful to eat or drink till the *Sixth Hour*. The *Jews* were offended at the Disciples, for plucking the Ears of Corn on the *Sabbath Day*, early in the Morning, because it was before the time in which by their Customs they esteem'd it lawful to break their *Fast*. In Imitation of this Custom, and in Prosecution of the Reason of it, the *Christian Church* has religiously observ'd Fasting before the Holy Communion; and the more devout Persons, tho' without any Obligation at all, refus'd to eat or drink till they had finish'd their Morning Devotions: And farther yet, upon Days of Publick Humiliation, which are design'd to be spent wholly in Devotion, and for the averting God's Judgments, if they were imminent, *Fasting* is commanded by the Church, together with *Prayer*; to this End, that the Spirit might be clearer and more angelical, when it is quitted in some Proportion from the Load of Flesh.

Fasting, when it is in order to *Prayer*, must be a total Abstinence from all Meat, or else an Abatement of the Quantity. For the Help which *Fasting* yields to *Prayer*, cannot be procured by changing *Flesh* into *Fish*, or Milk Meats into dry Diet, but by turning much into little, or little into none at all, during the Time of solemn and extraordinary *Prayer*.

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As *Fasting* is instrumental to Prayer, it must be attended with other Aids of the like Vertue and Efficacy, such as are removing for the Time all worldly Cares and secular Business; and therefore our blessed Saviour includes these together in the same Caution, *Take heed lest your Hearts be over-charg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this World, and that Day overtake you unawares.* To which add *Alms*, for upon the *Wings* of *Fasting* and *Alms* holy Prayer infallibly mounts up to Heaven.

When *Fasting* is intended to serve the Duty of Repentance, 'tis then best chosen when 'tis short, sharp, and effective; that is, either a total Abstinence from all Nourishment, according as we shall appoint or be appointed, during such a time as is separated for the Solemnity and Attendance upon the Employment: Or we may extend our Severity beyond the solemn Days, and keep our *Anger* against our *Sin*, as we keep our Sorrow, always in readiness; we should often refuse a pleasant Morfel, and abstain from the Bread of our Desires, and only take wholesome and less-pleasing Nourishment, we should vex our Appetite by refusing a lawful Satisfaction, since in its Petulancy and Luxury it prey'd upon unlawful Delights.

Fasting, when design'd in order to Repentance, must be ever join'd with an extreme Care that we fast from Sin; for there is no greater

greater Folly or Indecency in the World, than to commit that for which I am now judging and condemning my self. This is the best *Fast*, and the other may serve to promote the Interest of this, by increasing our dislike of Sin, and multiplying Arguments against it.

He that fasts for Repentance, must, during that Solemnity, abstain from all bodily Delights, and deny even the Innocent cravings of his Appetites; for 'tis a ridiculous Inconsistency for a Man to be at once mourning and merry, at once chastning and delighting himself, to have a Silence in his Kitchen and Musick in his Chamber, to judge the Stomach and feast the other Senses. I deny not but a Man may, in a single Instance, punish a particular Sin with a proper Instrument. If a Man has offended in his *Palate*, he may chuse to *fast* only; if he has sinn'd in *softness* and his *touch*, he may chuse to lie hard or work hard, and use sharp Inflictions. But tho' this *Discipline* be proper and particular, yet because the Sorrow is of the whole Man, no Sense must rejoyce, or be with any Study or Purpose feasted and entertained softly. This Rule is intended to relate to the solemn Days appointed for Repentance, *publickly* or *privately*; besides which, in the whole Course of our Lives, even in the midst of our most festival and freer Joys, we may sprinkle some single Instances and Acts of *Self-condemning* or *Punishing*, as to refuse a pleasant Mor-
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fel, or a delicious Draught, with a tacit Remembrance of the Sin that then returns to displease our Souls. And tho' these Actions be single, there is no Indecency in them, because a Man may abate of his ordinary Liberty and old Freedom with great Prudence, so he does it without Singularity in himself, or Trouble to others; but he may not abate of his solemn Sorrow; that may be Caution, but this wou'd be Softness, Effeminacy, and Indecency.

Fasting being intended as an Act of *Mortification*, to subdue a bodily Lust, as the Spirit of Fornication, or the Fondness of strong and impatient *Appetites*, it must not be a sudden, sharp, and violent Fast, but a State a Course of *Fasting*, a daily lessening our Portion of Meat and Drink, and a chusing such a coarse Diet as may make the least Preparation for the *Lusts* of the *Body*. He who *fasts* three Days without Food, will weaken other Parts more than the Ministers of Fornication, and when the Meats return as usually, they also will be serv'd as soon as any: In the mean time they will be supply'd and made active by the accidental Heat that comes with such violent *Fastings*, for this is a kind of aerial Devil. The Prince that rules in the Air is the Devil of Fornication, and he will be as tempting with the *Windiness* of a violent *Fast*, as with the *Flesh* of our ordinary *Meal*. But a daily Substraction of the Nourishment will introduce

roduce a less busie Habit of Body, and that will prove the more effectual Remedy.

This Devil is not to be cur'd by *Fasting* only, tho' it helps much towards it; it must not therefore be neglected, but assisted by all the proper Instruments of Remedy against this unclean Spirt, and what it is unable to do alone, it may effect in Company with other Instruments, and God's Blessing upon them.

All *Fasting*, for whatever End it be undertaken, must be perform'd without any Opinion of the Necessity of the thing itself, without censuring others; with all Humility, in order to the proper End, and just as a Man takes Physick, of which nobody has reason to be proud, and no body thinks it necessary, but because he is in Sicknes, or in Danger and Disposition to it.

All *Fasts*, ordain'd by publick Authority, are to be observ'd in order to the same Purposes to which they are enjoin'd, and to be accompany'd with Actions of the same Nature, just as it is in private *Fasts*; for there is no other Difference, but that in publick our Superiors chuse for us what in private we chuse for our selves.

Fasts, ordain'd by lawful Authority, are not to be neglected because alone they cannot do the thing for which they were enjoin'd. It may be, one Day of Humiliation will not

not obtain the Blessing, or alone kill the *Lust*, yet it must not be despis'd if it can do any thing towards it. An *Act of Fasting* is an *Act of Self-Denial*, and tho' it does not produce the Habit, yet it is a good *Act*.

All Christians having the Rule before them, and Conscience being very delicate in Matters of Worship, it were to be wish'd that as little Burthens as possible were laid on them, in such solemn Matters as *Fasts* are. When such Solemnities are politically appointed, to give a Colour to the Conduct of designing Mens Actions, 'tis a mocking of God Almighty, 'tis a national Sin, and may perhaps draw down a national Judgment. The Occasion of publick Fasts shou'd not only be lawful but apparent, and in some Measure necessary, to oblige sincere Christians to the strict Observance of them. If they are appointed *partially*, and more out of *Policy* than *Piety*, which will easily be distinguish'd by religious Persons, Conscience will not think itself ty'd up to apply the Exercise of this *Duty* to the pretended Occasion of it. But perhaps holy Men and Women may think that very Occasion sufficient to demand it of them, and to *fast* even for that Sin of *Fasting*.

When the principal End why a *Fast* is publickly prescrib'd, is obtain'd by some other Instrument in a particular Person, as if the
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Spirit of Fornication be cur'd by the Rite of Marriage, or by a Gift of Chastity, yet that Person so eas'd is not freed from the *Fasts* of the *Church* by that alone, if these *Fasts* can prudently serve any other End of *Religion*, as that of *Prayer*, of *Repentance*, or of *Mortification* of some other Appetite. For when it is instrumental to any End of the Spirit, it is freed from Superstition, and then we must have some other Reason to quit us from the Obligation, or that alone will not do it.

When the *Fast* publickly commanded, by reason of some Indisposition in the particular Person, cannot operate to the end of the Commandment, yet the avoiding Offence, and the complying with publick Order, is Reason enough to make the Obedience to it necessary, when it is visible that it was intended to a good End. For he who is otherwise not oblig'd, as when the Reason of the Law ceases as to his Particular, yet remains still oblig'd if he cannot do otherwise without Scandal; but this is an Obligation of Charity not Justice.

All *Fasting* is to be us'd with *Prudence* and *Charity*; for there is no End to which *Fasting* serves, but may be obtain'd by other Instruments, and therefore it must by no means be made an Occasion of Scruple, or become an Enemy to our Health, or be imposed

posed upon Persons that are sick or aged, or to whom it is in any Sense uncharitable: Such as are wearied Travellers; or to whom, in the whole Kind of it, it is useless; such as Women with Child, poor People, and little Children. But in these Cases the *Church* has made Provision, and inserted Caution into her Laws, and they are to be reduced to Practice, according to Custom and the Sentiments of prudent Persons, with great Latitude, and without Niceness and Curiosity; having this in our first Care, that we secure our Virtue, and next that we secure our Health, that we may the better exercise the Labours of Virtue; lest out of too much Austerity we bring our selves to that Condition, that it be necessary to be indulgent to Softness, Ease, and extreme Tenderness.

Let not *Intemperance* be the Prologue or Epilogue to your *Fast*, lest the *Fast* be so far from taking off any thing of the *Sin*, that it be an Occasion to encrease it. Wherefore when the *Fast* is done, be careful that no supervening Act of Gluttony, or excessive Drinking, unhallow the Religion of the past Day; but eat temperately, according to the Proportion of other Meals, lest Gluttony keep either of the Gates to Abstinence.

'Tis Matter of great Lamentation, to see the Abuses that are committed in the Exercise of Christian Duties, and none is more abus'd than this of religious Fasting. 'Tis reduc'd almost entirely to meer Form and Fashion, and the Mode of eating only chang'd from *Flesh* to *Fish*. Can these Hypocrites believe they can deceive God by this Change? That a pompous regale, for which the Rivers at Land, and the Shoars of the Sea, have been curiously search'd to furnish Fuel to the Flame of their Luxury, will be deem'd an Obedience to the *Fasting* that is requir'd of us? If they wou'd but seriously consider what it is to dally with the living God, they would tremble at such damnable Hypocrisy, and repent them heartily of a Sin which they flatter themselves (so strong is Satan in them) will pass for Repentance. The Variety, the Richness of their Fast-Dishes, excite and inflame that *Lust* which their *Fasting* was enjoin'd to mortifie; the pretended Cure feeds the Distemper, and the Antidote encreases the Poyson. This is not only a crying Sin among Papists, but too much practis'd by Protestants, and is grown so common that it is hardly thought to be sinful. But its being common will be far from excusing the Guilt, or lessening the Punishment, any more than the Company of the *Damn'd* will be a Mitigation of their Torment.

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As for those who fast solemnly and sincerely, and not in Compliance to Custom, and to avoid Scandal, great are the Benefits they receive by the religious Use of this Christian Exercise. He who undertakes to enumerate them, may, in the next Page also, reckon all the Benefits of Physick. For *Fasting* is not to be commended as a Duty, but as an Instrument, and in that Sense no Man can reprove or undervalue it, who knows either spiritual Arts or spiritual Necessities. By the Doctors of the Church it is called the Nourishment of *Prayer*, the Restraint of *Lust*, the Wings of the Soul, the Diet of the Angels, the Means of Humility and Self-denial, the Purification of the Spirit. The Paleness and Meagreness of the Visage, which is consequent to the daily *Fasts* of great *Mortifiers*, is by one of the *Fathers* said to be the Mark in the Forehead, which the Angel observ'd when he sign'd the Saints in the Forehead to escape the Wrath of God. *The Soul which is greatly vexed, which goeth stooping and feeble, and the Eyes that fail, and the hungry Soul, shall give thee Praise and Righteousness, O Lord.*

Not to build more on the holy Suggestion of the good Father than Reason and Religion will warrant, 'tis certain that *Fasting* was the universal Practice of the Christian Church

Church in all Ages; that our Saviour has prescrib'd Rules concerning it, which supposes plainly enough that it is not a Practice left indifferent, to be omitted or comply'd with at Pleasure, tho' it is a Free-Will Offering, and so dependent of various Circumstances, that the Exercise of it cannot be fixt by particular Rules; besides, the constant Practice of the devoutest Men, the Nature of this Body we are cloath'd with, and the frequent Sins to which the *Lusts* of it have betray'd us, make it highly reasonable and necessary that we should be often exercising our selves in this Discipline, either in order to our Mortification and our future Security, or as an Act of Affliction or Revenge for our past Faults.

Whoever totally neglects it, upon Pretence of the ill Effects it has upon either Body or Mind, ought well to be assur'd that the Uneasiness of the one or the other be not the Effect of a wanton and carnal Mind, rather than of the Temper of the Body, and that this Body will admit of no Degrees of this spiritual Discipline; otherwise he is oblig'd to it according to his Capacity.

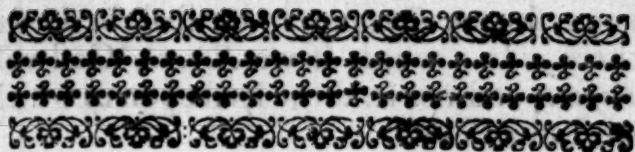
To *Fasting* must always be join'd *Alms* and *Prayer*. It must never have the least Mixture of Vain-Glory. What then will become of all the fashionable *Fasts* that at certain Seasons make so much Shew in great

Houses? Without Alms *Fasts* are *insignificant*, with Vain-Glory they are *sinful*: But if any just Reason disables any Man to give Alms, or to devote the day entirely to religious Exercise, it cannot be thought but that *Fasting* may be us'd as an Act of Affliction, provided it be consecrated to God by a holy Attention at least.

Let every good Christian, who practises this needful Injunction of Christ's Church, call then upon God for his Blessing.

O glorious God, I see in what a World I live, and what a Body this Soul of mine dwells in, how little Fire kindles those Lusts which blast its Innocence and destroy my Peace. I remember how often I have behav'd my self unbefecming a Child of God, only to gratifie the Inclination of an ungovernable Body. Enable me therefore so to mortifie and subdue it, that I may enjoy an entire Peace and Conquest; so to humble and afflict it, that my Revenge may testifie the Sorrow I feel for my Misdemeanours; and accept thou my Sorrow to the Atonement of my Sins, thro' the Blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.

REPEN-



REPENTANCE.



NOTHING in the World makes so great a Change as *Repentance*: It changes Things in *Heaven* and in *Earth*; for it changes the whole Man from *Sin* to *Grace*; from *Vicious Habits* to *Holy Customs*; from *Unchaste Bodies* to *Angelical Souls*; from *Swine* to *Philosophers*; from *Drunkenness* to *sober Counsels*: And God himself, with whom is no *Variableness* or *Shadow of Change*, is pleas'd, by descending to our weak Understandings, to say, that he changes also upon Man's *Repentance*; that he alters his Decrees; revokes his Sentence; cancels the Bills of Accusation; throws the Records of Shame and Sorrow out of the Court of Heaven; and lifts up the Sinner from the *Grave* to *Life*, from his *Prison* to a *Throne*, from *Hell* and the *Guilt of Eternal Torture*, to *Heaven*, and a *Title to never-ceasing Felicities*. If we be bound on *Earth*, we shall

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be bound in *Heaven*. If we be absolv'd here upon sincere *Repentance*, we shall be loosed there. In a word, if we *Repent*, God will *Repent*, and not send the Evil upon us which we had deserv'd.

But *Repentance* is a Conjugation and Society of many *Duties*. It contains in it all the Parts of a Holy Life, from the Time of our Return, to the Day of our Death inclusively; and it has in it something especially relating to the Sins of our former Days, which are now to be abolish'd by special Acts, and have oblig'd us to special Labours, brought in many new Necessities, and put us into a very great deal of Danger. It being a Duty consisting of so many Parts, and such Employments; it also requires much Time, and leaves a Man in the same Degree of Hope or Pardon, as is his Restitution to the State of Righteousness and Holy Living, for which we covenanted in our *Baptism*. For we must know, that there is but one *Repentance* in a Man's whole Life, if *Repentance* be taken in a Proper, Strict, Evangelical, Covenant Sense, and not after the ordinary understanding of the Word; that is, we are but once to change our whole State of Life, from the Power of the Devil and his entire Possession, from the State of Sin and Death, from the Body of Corruption, to the Life of Grace, to the Possession

Possession of Jesus, to the Kingdom of the Gospel; and this is done in the *Baptism* of the *Water*, or in the Baptism of the Spirit, when the first Rite comes to be verify'd by God's Grace coming upon us, and by our Obedience to the Heavenly Calling, we working together with God. After this Change, if ever we fall into the contrary State, and be wholly estrang'd from God and Religion, professing our selves Servants of Unrighteousness, God has made no more Covenant of Restitution with us. There is no Place left for any more Repentance, or entire Change of Condition, or new Birth; A Man can be regenerated but once. Such are Voluntary, Malicious, Apostate, Obstinate, Impenitent Persons, and the like: But if we be over-taken by Infirmary, or enter into the Borders of this State, and commit a grievous Sin, or Ten or Twenty, so we be not in the entire possession of the Devil, we are for the present in a damnable Condition if we die; but if we live, we are in a recoverable Condition, for so we may *repent* often. We *repent* or rise from Death but once, but from Sickness many Times; and by the Grace of God we shall be pardon'd if we so *repent*. Our Hopes of Pardon are just as is our Repentance, which if it be Timely, Hearty, Industrious, and sufficient, God accepts, not by weighing

Grains and Scruples, but by estimating the great Proportion of our Life. A Hearty Endeavour, and an effectual general Change shall get our Pardon; the unavoidable Infirmities, past Evils, and present Imperfections, and short Interruptions, against which we Watch, and Pray, and Strive, being put upon the Accounts of the *Cross*, and Pay'd for by the Holy Jesus.

He who repents truly, is greatly sorrowful for his past Sins; not with a superficial Sigh or Tear, but a Pungent Afflictive Sorrow; such a Sorrow as hates the Sin so much, that the Man would rather chuse to die than act it any more: This Sorrow is call'd in Scripture *A Weeping sorely; a Weeping with all Bitterness of Heart; a Weeping Day and Night; a Sorrow of Heart; a Breaking of the Spirit; Mourning like a Dove, and Chattering like a Swallow*. And we may read the Degree and Manner of it in the *Lamentations*, and sad Accents of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, when he wept for the Sins of the Nation; in the Heart-breaking of *David* when he mourn'd for his Murther and Adultery; and the bitter Weeping of *St. Peter* after the shameful denying of his Master. The Expression of the Sorrow differs according to the Temper of the Body, the Sex, the Age, and Circumstances of Action, and the Motive of Sorrow, and by many
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Accidental Tenderneſſes, or Maſculine Hardneſſes. The *Repentance* is not to be eſtimated by the *Tears*, but by the Grief: And the Grief is to be valued not by the Sensitive Trouble, but by the Cordial Hatred of the Sin, and ready Actual Dereliction of it; and a Reſolution, and real reſiſting of its conſequent Temptations. Some People can ſhed Tears for nothing, ſome for any Thing; but the proper and true Effects of a Godly Sorrow, are Fear of the Divine Judgments, Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure, Watchings and Strivings againſt Sin, patiently enduring the *Croſs* of Sorrow, which God ſends as our Punishment; and Accuſation of our ſelves in perpetual begging Pardon; Mean and Baſe Opinions of our ſelves; and all the natural Productions from theſe, according to our Temper and Conſtitution. For if we be apt to Weep in other Accidents, it is ill if we Weep not alſo in the Sorrow of *Repentance*; not that Weeping is of itſelf a Duty, but that the Sorrow of it, if it be as great, will be ſtill expreſs'd in as great a manner.

Our Sorrow for Sins muſt retain the Proportion of our Sins, tho' not the Equality. We have no particular Meaſures of our Sins. We know not which is greateſt, Sacrilege, Superſtition, Idolatry, Covetouſneſs, the renouncing our Religion, or the betraying

our Country; and therefore God ties us not to nice Measures of *Sorrow*, but only that we keep the general Rules of Proportion; that is, that a great Sin have a great Grief, a smaller Crime being to be wash'd off with a less Shower.

Our *Sorrow* for Sin is then best accounted of, for its Degree, when it, together with all the Penal and Afflictive Duties of Repentance, shall have equall'd or exceed'd the Pleasure we had in Commission of the Sin.

True *Repentance* is a punishing Duty, and acts its *Sorrow*, and judges and condemns the Sin, by voluntary submitting to such Sadnesses as God sends on us; or strives to prevent the Judgment of God, by judging our selves, and punishing our Bodies and our Spirits, by such Exercises of Piety as are troublesome to the Body; such as are *Fasting, Watching, Long Prayers*, troublesome Postures in our *Prayers*, expensive *Alms*, and all outward Acts of Humiliation. For he who must judge himself, must condemn himself if he be guilty; and if he be condemn'd, he must be punish'd; and if he be so judg'd, it will help to prevent the Judgment of the Lord, as St. *Paul* instructs us in this particular. Our Grief may be so full of Trouble, as to out-weigh all the Burthens of *Fasts* and Bodily Afflictions, and then the other
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are less necessary: When they are used, the Benefit of them is to obtain of God a Remission, or a Lessening of such Temporal Judgments which God has decreed against the Sins; but the Sinner is not by any Thing of this reconcil'd to the Eternal Favour of God; for as yet this is but the Introduction to *Repentance*.

Every true Penitent is oblig'd to confess his Sins, and to humble himself before God for ever. Confession of Sins has a special Promise; *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins*. God has bound himself to forgive us, if we duly confess our Sins, and do all that for which Confession was appointed: If we are asham'd of them, and own them no more: for Confession of our Sins, to God, can signify nothing of itself in its direct Nature: He sees us when we act them, and keeps a Record of them, and we forget them unless he reminds us of them by his *Grace*. Therefore to confess them to God, does not punish us or make us asham'd: But Confession, when it proceeds from Shame and Sorrow, and is an Act of Humiliation and Self-Condemnation, and a laying open our Wounds for Cure, is then a Duty God delights in. In all which Circumstances we shall be very much help'd if we follow the Advice of *St. James*, and *confess our Sins to one another*; not as the

Wicked Ones do, who boast of their Wickedness, and are even so impiously vain as to belie their own selves to shew their Superiority in Sin; but with all Humility, Self-Abasement and Confusion, to prudent and pious Pastors, whose Instructions may serve to recover us and restore us to the right Path from whence we wander'd. , But we must not think that our unburthening our Minds of this Load to a Minister will give us any true Ease, unless we do it with due Contrition and a sincere Resolution of new Obedience; or that there is any, the least Efficacy in such an Act of itself, except it proceeds from a just Sense of our own Guilt, an Abhorrence of the Crime, and an earnest Desire of Forgiveness from God by his and our own Prayers. When our Spiritual Guide knows our Needs, he can best Minister Comfort or Reproof, Oil or Causticks: He can more opportunely recommend our particular State to God; he can determine our Cases of Conscience, and judge better for us than we do for our selves. The shame of opening such Ulcers may restrain our forwardness to contract them; and all these Circumstances of Advantage will do very much towards the Forgiveness. This Course was taken by the new Converts in the Days of the Apostles; *for many that believ'd came, and confess'd and shew'd their Deeds.* And

it were well if this Duty was practis'd Prudently and Innocently in order to Publick Discipline, or Private Comfort and Instruction.

That it be done to God, is a Duty not directly for itself but for its Adjuncts, and the Duties that go with it, and before it, or after it; Which Duties, because they are to be help'd and guided by our Pastors and Curates of Souls, he is careful of his Eternal Interest, who will not lose the Advantage of using a private Guide and Judge; *He that hideth his Sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have Mercy.* The Condition of Mercy is always the forsaking of Sins. *Absolution* without *Repentance*, tho' pronounc'd by an Angel, wou'd be of no more effect, than a Blessing upon a Sin; but those that Repent, the Church thro' Christ pronounces Absolv'd. Holy Persons in Ancient Times were wont to carry *Table-Books* about them, and wrote in them an Account of all their determinate Thoughts, Purposes, Words, and Actions, in which they had suffer'd Infirmary; that by communicating the State of their Souls, they might be Instructed, and Guided, and Corrected, or Encouraged.

True *Repentance* must reduce to act all its Holy Purposes, and enter into, and run thro' the State of Holy Living, which is
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contrary to that State of Darkneſs, in which in Times paſt we walk'd. For to reſolve to do it, and yet not to do it, is to break our Reſolution and our Faith, to mock God, to falſifie and evacuate all the preceding Acts of *Repentance*, and to make our Pardon hopeleſs, and our Hope fruitleſs. He who reſolves to live well when a Danger or violent Fear is upon him; or when the Appetites of Luſt are newly ſatisfy'd, or newly ſerv'd; and yet when the Temptation comes again, ſins again, and then is ſorrowful, and reſolves once more againſt it, and yet falls when the Temptation returns; is a Vain Man, but no true Penitent, nor in the State of Grace. And if he chance to die in one of thoſe good Moods, is very far from Salvation; for if it be neceſſary that we reſolve to live well, it is neceſſary we ſhould do ſo: Reſolution being an imperfect Act, a Term of Relation, and ſignifies nothing but in order to the Actions. It is as a *Faculty* is to the Act; it's the Spring to the Harvest, as Eggs are to Birds, and a Relative to its Correferent; Nothing without it. No Man therefore can be in the State of Grace, and actual Favour, by Reſolutions and Holy Purpoſes; theſe are but the Gate and Portal towards Pardon. A Holy Life is the only Perfection of *Repentance* and the firm Ground upon which we can

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cast the Anchor of our Hope in the Mercies of God thro' Jesus Christ.

No Man is to reckon his Pardon immediately upon his return from Sin to the Beginnings of a good Life, but is to begin his Hopes and Degrees of Confidence according as Sin dies in him and Grace lives, as the Habits of Sin lessen, and Righteousness grows; according as Sin returns but seldom, in smaller Instances, and without Choice, by Surprise, without Deliberation, is highly dis-relish'd, and presently dash'd against the Rock Christ Jesus by a Holy Sorrow, and renew'd Care of more strict Watchfulness: For a Holy Life being the Condition of the Covenant on our Part, as we return to God, so God returns to us, and our State returns to the probability of Pardon..

Every Man is to work out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling; and after the Commission of Sins, his Fears must multiply, because every new Sin, and every great Declining from the Ways of God, is still a Degree of new Danger, and has increas'd God's Anger, and has made him more uneasy to grant Pardon. When he does grant it, 'tis upon harder Terms both for Doing and Suffering. We must do more for Pardon, and it may be suffer much more. For we must know that God pardons our Sins by Parts; as our Duty increases, and our
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Care is more prudent and active, so God's Anger decreases; and yet it may be the last Sin you committed made God unalterably resolv'd to send upon you some sad Judgment. We are uncertain of the Particulars in all *Cases*, and therefore we have Reason always to mourn for our Sins, that have so provok'd God, and made our Condition so full of Danger, that it may be no *Prayers*, or *Tears*, or *Duty*, can alter his Sentence concerning some sad Judgment upon us. Thus God irrevocably decreed to punish the *Israelites* for Idolatry, tho' *Moses* pray'd for them; and God forgave them in some Degree, so far as that he would not cut them off from being a People: Yet he would not forgive them so, but he would visit their Sin upon them; and he did so.

A true *Penitent* must all the Days of his Life pray for Pardon, and never think the Work compleated till he Dies; not by any Act of his own, by no Act of the Church, by no Forgiveness by the Party injur'd, by no Restitution. These are all Instruments of great Use and Efficacy, and the Means by which it is to be done at length; but still the Sin lyes at the Door ready to return upon us in Judgment and Damnation, if we return to it in Choice or Action. And whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not, nor how far he has forgiven us: All
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that we have done is not of sufficient Worth to obtain Pardon. Wherefore, let all *Penitents* pray still, and still be sorrowful for what they have done amiss, and for ever watch against it. Those Beginnings of Pardon which are working all the way, will then at last be perfected in the Day of the Lord.

Defer not at all to *Repent*; much less may you put it off to a *Death-Bed*; 'tis not an easie Thing to root out the Habits of Sin, which a Man's whole Life has gather'd and confirm'd; we find work enough to mortifie one beloved Lust in our very best Advantage of Strength and Time, and before it is so deeply rooted, as it must needs be suppos'd to be at the End of a wicked Life: And therefore it will prove impossible, when the Work is so great, and the Strength so little; when Sin is so strong, and Grace so weak; for they always keep the same Proportion of Increase and Decrease; and as Sin grows, Grace decays. The more Need we have of Grace, the less at that time we shall have of it; because the greatness of our Sins, which makes the Need, has lessen'd the Grace of God, which should help us. To which add this Consideration, That on a Man's *Death-Bed* the Day of *Repentance* is past: For *Repentance* being the renewing of a *Holy Life*, a Living
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the Life of Grace, it is a Contradiction to say, a Man can live a *Holy Life*, upon his *Death-Bed*; especially if we consider, that for a Sinner to live a *Holy Life*, we must first suppose him to have overcome all his Evil Habits, and then to have made a Purchase of the contrary Graces by the Labours of great Prudence, Watchfulness, Self-Denial and Severity ; *Nothing that is Excellent can be wrought suddenly.*

After the *Beginnings* of a Sinner's Recovery, let him be infinitely fearful of a *Relapse*: And therefore upon the Stock of his sad Experience, where his *Failings* were, and by special Acts, let him fortifie that *Faculty*, and arm against *Temptation*. For if all those Arguments which God uses to us to preserve our Innocence, and the Sinner's late Danger, and his Fears, and the Goodness of God, make him once escape ; and the Shame of his Fall, and the Sense of his own Weaknesses will not make him watchful against a Fall; especially knowing how much it costs a Man to be restor'd; it will be infinitely more dangerous if ever he falls again, not only lest God should no more accept him to Pardon, but even his own Hopes will be made more desperate, and his Impatience greater, and his Shame turn to Impudence, and his *latter End* will be worse than his beginning. Further, Let him

him consider that his Sin, which was formerly in a good Way of being pardon'd, will not only return upon him with all its own Loads, but with the Baseness of Unthankfulness; and he will be set as far back from Heaven as ever. All his former Labours and Fears, and Watchings and Agonies will be reckon'd for nothing, but as Arguments to upbraid his Folly; who, when he had set *One Foot in Heaven*, did pull that back, and carry *both to Hell*.

One would think there needed no other Arguments to move a Sinner to *Repentance*, than to tell him, Unless he repents, he shall certainly perish; and if he do's Repent timely and entirely by living a Holy Life, he shall be forgiven, and be sav'd. But this Consideration must be enlarg'd with some great Circumstances; and we are to remember, That to admit Mankind to *Repentance*, and Pardon, was a Favour greater than ever God gave to the *Angels*, and to the *Devils*; for they had not the Permission to come to Second Thoughts. Christ never groan'd one Groan for them; he never suffer'd one Stripe, nor one Affront, nor shed one Drop of Blood to restore them to Hopes of Blessedness after their first Failings. But this he did for us; he paid the Score of our Sins only, that we might be admitted to *repent*; and that this *Repentance* might be effectual

etual to the great Purposes of Felicity and Salvation.

Consider, that as it cost Christ many Millions of *Prayers*, and *Groans*, and *Sighs*; so he is now, at this Instant, and has been 1700 Years, Night and Day, incessantly praying for Grace for us, that we may *repent*; and for Pardon, when we do; and for Degrees of Pardon, beyond the Capacities of our Infirmities, and the Merit of our *Sorrows* and Amendment. This Prayer will be continu'd by him till his Second Coming, *for he ever liveth to make Intercession for us*. And that we may know what it is, in behalf of which he intercedes, St. Paul tells us his Design; *We are Ambassadors for Christ, as though he did beseech you by us; We pray you in Christ's stead to be reconcil'd to God*. And what Christ prays us to do, he prays to God that we may do; that which he desires of us as his Servants, he desires of God, who is the Fountain of Grace and Power unto us, and without whose Assistance we can do nothing.

That ever we should repent, was so costly a Purchase, so great a Concernment, so high a Favour; and the Event is esteem'd by God Himself so great an Excellency, that our Blessed Saviour tells us, *There shall be joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth*; meaning, that when Christ shall be glorify'd,

fy'd, and at the Right Hand of the Father, making Intercession for us, praying for our Repentance; the Conversion and Repentance of every Sinner is part of Christ's Glorification; it is the answering of his Prayers; 'tis a Portion of his Reward, in which he does Essentially glory by the Joys of his glorify'd Humanity. This is the Joy of our Lord Himself directly, not of the Angels, except only by Reflection. The Joy, said our Blessed Redeemer, shall be in the Presence of the Angels; They shall see the Glory of the Lord, the Answering of his Prayers, the Satisfaction of his Desires, and the Reward of his Sufferings, in the *Repentance* and Consequent Pardon of a Sinner. For this Reason he once suffer'd, and for that Reason he rejoyces for ever. Wherefore, when a Penitent Sinner comes to receive the Effect and full Consummation of his Pardon, 'tis call'd *an Entering into the Joy of our Lord*; a partaking of that Joy which Christ receiv'd at our Conversion, and enjoy'd ever since.

Add to this, That the Rewards of Heaven are so great and glorious, and Christ's Burthen is so light, his Yoke so easie, that it is a shameless Impudence to expect so great Glories at a less Rate, than so little a Service, at a lower Rate than a Holy Life. It cost the Heart-Blood of the Son of God
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to obtain Heaven for us upon that Condition: And who shall die again to get Heaven for us upon easier Terms? what would you do if God should command you to kill your Eldest Son, or to work in the Mines for a Thousand Years together, or to Fast all your Life-time with Bread and Water? Were not Heaven a very great Bargain even after all this? And when God requires nothing of us, but to live Soberly, Justly, and Godly; which Things of themselves are to a Man a very great Felicity, and necessary to our present Well-being; Shall we think this to be an intolerable Burthen, and that Heaven is too little a Purchase at that Price? That God, in meer Justice, will take a Death-bed Sigh, or a Groan, and a few unprofitable Tears and Promises, in Exchange for all our Duty!

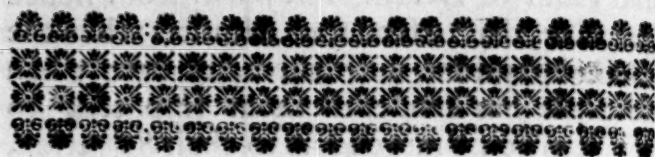
If these Considerations, join'd together with our own Interest, even as much as the Felicity and the Sight of God, and the avoiding the intolerable Pains of Hell, and many intermediate Judgments come to, will not move us to leave the Filthiness, the Trouble, the Uneasiness, and the Unreasonableness of Sin, and turn to God; there is no more to be said, we must perish in our Folly.

This sure is sufficient to warn all Christians against deferring their Repentance to
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the Hour of Death. They will from hence perceive, that to send for a Minister when the Doctor has done with them, or even when Sickness has render'd them Impotent to Sin, can be no more Help to their Salvation, than to that of the Damn'd. And how comfortably do some deluded Wretches slide into Perdition, depending on the Efficacy of a few apt Prayers by the Minister, a too late Receiving of the Lord's Supper? Do they think that God will take their Service, when the Devil can have no more of it; and that the Repentance of their last Moments, shall atone for the Sins of their whole Lives? How dreadful will their Disappointment be, who die in this sad Dream! and in what a World of Misery will they awake!



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The *SACRAMENT*.



IT has been often observ'd, that the Design of this Work was suited with a particular View to serve the *Ladies*, to whom 'tis particularly Address'd: But the generality of Authors having spoken to the *Men*, that Sex is often nam'd in Imitation of them; but the Women always understood too; there being but few or no Virtues or Vices which do not alike concern them both.

There remains another Duty to be treated of, to which many of the Female Sex seem to need some Incitation; and that is, Communicating; a Part of Devotion, the looser Sort scarce ever think in Season till their *Death-Beds*. As if that Sacrament, like the *Extreme Unction* of the *Papists*, was only fit for Expiring Souls. But to such we may apply the Words of the *Angel* to the *Woman*, *Why seek ye the Living among the Dead?* Why think ye that the *Sun of Righteousness* is only to shine in the *Shades* of Death? or that Christ is never to give us his Flesh, till

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we are putting off our own? One of the principal Ends of that *Sacrament* is, to engage and enable us to a new Life: How preposterous then is it, how utterly inconsistent with that End, to defer it to the Hour of Death? It is true, 'tis a good *Viaticum* for such as are in their Way towards Bliss; but 'tis too bold a Hope to fancy it shall in an Instant bring them into that Way, who have their whole Life posted on in a Contrary. The *Roads* to *Heaven* and *Hell* lie sure too far asunder to be within one Step's Distance: Nor can it with any Safety be presum'd, that once Receiving at their Death, shall expiate so many wilful Neglects of it in their Life.

It is to be hop'd these total Omissions are not a Common Guilt; yet, with many others, the Fault differs only in Degree; they do not wholly omit, but yet come so seldom, as if they thought it a very Arbitrary Matter whether they come or no. And this truly is observable in many, who seem to give good Attendance on other Parts of Divine Worship: 'Tis a sad Spectacle to see, that let a *Church* be never so much crouded at *Sermons*, 'tis empty'd in an Instant when the Communion begins. People run as it were frightened from it, as if they thought with those in *Malachi*, that the *Table of our Lord is polluted*; That some
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Pest or Infection would thence break forth upon them. A strange Indignity to the Majesty, and Ingratitude to the Love of our *Redeemer*! Let a King, or but some great Man, make a publick Entertainment, how hard is it to keep back the pressing Multitude? Many Officers are necessary to repel the uninvited Guests; and yet here there needs more to drive us to it, tho' the Invitation be more General, and the Treat infinitely more Magnificent.

I know this Fault, like many others, shrouds it self under a fair Disguise; and this barbarous *Neglect* pretends to the humblest *Veneration*. People say 'tis the great *Reverence* they have for the *Sacrament*, which keeps them at so great a Distance. That certainly is a fictitious *Reverence* which discards Obedience. And when Christ commands our Coming, our drawing back looks more like *Stubbornness* and *Rebellion*, than *Awe* and *Respect*. I suppose we pretend not to exceed the *Primitive Christians* in Humility and godly Fear; and yet they communicated daily. Our *Reverence* therefore is of a much different Make from theirs, if it produces such contrary Effects. Indeed 'tis to be fear'd, that many put a great Cheat upon themselves in this Matter. The *Eucharist* is justly accounted the highest of divine Ordinances; and those who think of

no Preparation in others, yet have some general Impressions of the Necessity of it in this; but the Uneasiness of the Task discourages them; they dare not come without a Wedding-Garment, and yet are loth to be at the Pains to put it on. Thus all this goodly Pretext of Reverence, is but the Devil in *Samuel's* Mantle, is but *Sloth* clad in the Habit of *Humility*.

And to this *Temptation* of Sloth, there is another Thing very subservient, which is the easie and slight Opinion that is commonly taken of Sins of *Omission*. Many are startled at great *Commissions*, think them to carry a Face of Deformity and Horror, who in the mean time look on *Omissions* as *Privations*, and meer *Nothings*. As if all the *Affirmative* Precepts were only Things of Form put in by God, rather to try our Inclinations than to oblige our Performance; and so were rather Overtures and Proposals, which we may assent to or not, than Injunctions, which at our Peril we must obey. A Fancy no less absurd than impious, that God should be content so to Compound with his Creatures, and, like a *Prince* over-power'd by his *Vassals*, consent to remit all their Homage, absolve them from all positive Duty, so they would be but so civil as not to fly in his Face, or to commit Outrage on his Person: Which wild Imagina-

tion needs no other Confutation than that Form of Indictment our Saviour gives us as the Model of that which shall be us'd at the Last Day, in St. *Matthew's* Gospel, where the whole Process lies against Sins of *Omission*; and yet the Sentence is as dismal and irreverfible, as if all the Commissions in the World had been put into the Bill.

And certainly of all *Omissions*, none is like to be more severely charg'd than this of Communicating; which is not only a *Disobedience*, but an *Unkindness*, striking at the *Authority*, as well as the Love of our Lord; when he so affects a *Union* with us, that he creates *Mysteries* only to effect it; when he descends even to our *Sensuality*; and because we want *Spiritual* Appetites, puts himself within Reach of our *Natural*. As he once veil'd his Divinity in *Flesh*, so he now *veils* even that *Flesh* under the Form of our *Corporal* Nourishment; only that he may the more indissolvably *unite*, nay, incorporate Himself with us. When, I say, he does all this, we are not only Impious, but Inhumane, if it will not attract us; especially when he does all this upon the most Endearing Memory of what he has before done for us; when he presents Himself to our Embraces in the same Form wherein he presented himself to God for our *Expiation*; when he shews us those *Wounds* which

which our Iniquities made, those *Stripes* by which we were *heal'd*, that *Death* by which we are reviv'd. Shall we, to compleat the Scene of his Passion, force him to that pathetick Complaint, *Have ye no Regard, all ye that pass by?* Shall we, instead of smiting our Breast, as did other Witnesses of his Sufferings, turn our *Backs*? If we can habitually do this, 'tis to be fear'd, the next Degree will be to wag our *Heads* too; and we shall have the Profaneness to deride, what we have not the Piety to commemorate.

This seems to be no improbable *Fear*; for in Religion there are gradual Declinations, as well as Advances. Coldness and Tepidity, if not stopt in the Progress, quickly grow to Loathing and Contempt. And indeed, to what can we more reasonably impute the great *Overflowings* of Profaneness among us, than to our ill Husbanding the Means of Grace, to the Disuse and even Abuse of the Holy Sacrament, which of all the Means of Grace has the greatest Energy and Power?

Were there no other Benefit deriv'd from it, except that which the Preparation implies 'twere very considerable. It brings us to a Recollection; fixes our Indefinite Purposes of searching and trying our Ways, which else perhaps we shou'd infinitely de-

fer; stops our Career in Sin, and by acquainting us with our selves, shews us where our Danger lies, and how we are to avert it; what Breaches are made upon our Souls, and how we must repair them; all which are, with many, seldom thought of, but when the time of *Communicating* approaches. We live so far from our selves, know so little what is done in us, that we answer the Description the Prophet makes of the Surprize of *Babylon*, of which the King knew nothing, till Post after Post ran to inform him, that *his City was taken at one End*. We often lye secure while the Enemy is within our *Walls*, and therefore they are Friendly Alarms which the *Sacrament* gives us to look to our Defence. But if when the *Trumpet* sounds, none will prepare himself to the *Battel*; if when the Minister gives warning of a *Sacrament*, and the Preparation it requires, we go our Ways, and with *Gallio care for none of those Things*, or with *Fælix put it off to a convenient Time*, we wilfully expose our selves; and 'tis but just Christ's dreadful Menace should be executed upon us, that we *die in our Sins*, who will frustrate such an Opportunity of a Rescue from them.

But 'tis not only this remoter and accidental Advantage, this *preventing Grace*, which the Holy *Eucharist* affords: It contains

tains yet greater and more intrinsick Benefits, 'tis a Spring of *resisting Grace* also, a Magazine of spiritual Artillery to fortifie us against all the Assaults of the Devil, the great *Catholicon* for all the Maladies of the Soul; that which if duly receiv'd will qualifie us to make *St. Paul's Boast*, *I can do all things thro' Christ which strengthens me*. In a Word, 'tis to us whatever we need, *Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption*, because it possesses us of him who is so; wherefore, whenever we neglect it, we manifestly betray our own Interest, and implicitly chuse *Death*, while we thus run from Life.

Thus we see, there is a concurrence of all Sorts of Arguments for this Duty. Oh that some at least of them may prevail! If we are not tractable enough to do it in *Obedience*, yet let us be so ingenuous as to do it for *Love*, for *Gratitude*; or if for neither of these, let us be at least so wise as to do it for *Interest* and *Advantage*. People are apt to pretend Business. The *Farms* and the *Oxen* must excuse their coming to the *Feast*. But alas! What Business can there be of equal Necessity with this? Yet even that Apology is superseded to the Sex I more particularly speak to. It would therefore be one part of the Benefit, its taking up some of their Time. Let me then earnestly beseech

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them,

them, not to grudge a few of their vacant Hours to this so happy an Employment.

Did any of their near Friends and Relations invite them to an Interview, they would not think him too importunate, tho' he repeated the Summons weekly, nay daily, but wou'd punctually observe the Meeting. And when their Saviour much seldomer intreats their Company, shall he not obtain it? Must he never see them but at two or three solemn Times of the Year? And shall they wonder at any intervening Invitation, as the *Sbunamite's* Husband did at her going to the Prophet, when it was neither *new Moon* nor *Sabbath*, and tell him, 'tis not *Easter* or *Christmas*? This were not only to be *Irreligious* but *Rude*. And methinks these who stand so much upon Punctilio's of Civility to one another, shou'd not then only lay aside their good Manners when they are to treat with their *Redeemer*. Certainly he is not so unpleasant Company that they need shun his Converse: If he appears so to any, 'tis that shunning which is the Cause of it; he does not open his Treasures to Strangers: They who come now and then for Form sake, no wonder if their *Entertainment* be as cold as their *Addresses*. They that wou'd indeed *taste how sweet the Lord is*, must by the frequency of their coming, shew the Heartiness of it, and then they wou'd indeed

deed find it a *Feast of Fat Things*, as the *Prophet* speaks.

In a word, let them but make Experiment, resolve for a certain Time, be it a Year or thereabouts, to omit no Opportunity, and withal no due Preparation of *Communicating*; I am a little confident they will afterwards need no other Importunity but that of their own Longings. The expiration of that *Definite* Time will prove the beginning of an Indefinite; and their Resolutions will have no other Limits but their Lives. For in all the whole Mystery of Godliness, in all the Oeconomy of the Gospel, there is not so expedite, so infallible a Means of Growth in Grace, as a frequent and worthy Participation of this Blessed *Sacrament*; by which we not only compleat all our Devotions, crown and hallow the rest of our Oblations to God, but we shall be advanc'd in all the Practical Parts of Piety.

For tho' this and other Sacred Offices be perform'd in the *Church*, the Efficacy of them is not circumscrib'd within those Walls, but follows the Devout Soul through all the Occurrences of Human Life.

She who has intently consider'd the Presence of God in the *Sanctuary*, has learn'd so much of his *Ubiquity*, that she will not easily forget it in other Places; and she who

remembers that, will need no other Guard to secure her Innocence; no other Incentive to animate her Endeavours; since she is view'd by him who is equally Powerful to punish and reward; who regards not the Person of the Mighty, nor can be aw'd into Connivance by a Prince. Indeed, a serious reflecting on the Divine Presence, is the most certain Curb to all disorderly Appetites; as on the contrary, the *not having God before their Eyes*, is in Scripture the comprehensive Description of the most wretched, profligate State of Sin.

It concerns therefore all those who aspire to true Piety, to nourish that awful Sense in their Hearts, as that which will best enable them to practise the Apostle's Advice, *To cleanse themselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God.*

There is nothing in our Religion so Solemn as the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*; to the frequent Receiving of which, we are bound as *Christians*, and we cannot neglect it without a great Contempt of our Blessed Saviour and his Religion: He has appointed it for a Solemn Remembrance of his great Love to us, in laying down his Life for us; and therefore he commands us to do it in Remembrance of Him: And St. Paul tells us, *That as often as we eat this Bread,*
and

and drink this Cup, we do shew forth the Lord's Death till he come.

Great are both the Comfort and Benefit of it. The Comfort of it, because it does not only represent to us the exceeding Love of our Saviour, in giving his Body to be broken, and his Blood to be shed for us; but it also seals to us all those Blessings and Benefits which are purchas'd and procur'd for us by his Death and Passion, the Pardon of Sins, and Power against Sin.

The Benefit of it is also great, because hereby we are confirm'd in Goodness. Our Resolutions of better Obedience are strengthen'd, and the Grace of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to do his Will, is hereby convey'd to us. The best Preparation for it is, a sincere *Repentance* for all our Sins and Miscarriages, which we remember our selves to be at any time guilty of; *Daily Prayer* to God, that he wou'd give us sincere *Repentance* for all our Sins, and mercifully forgive them to us; and a serious and firm Resolution to forsake them, and to do better for the future; to be more careful in all our Actions, and more constant in *Prayer* to God for his Grace, to enable us to keep his Commandments; a being in *Charity* with all Men, and forgiving those who have injur'd us by Word or Deed, as we hope for Forgiveness from God.

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Let none of us say that we are not fitted and prepar'd for it; 'tis our Duty to be so; and if we be not prepar'd to receive the *Sacrament*, we are not qualify'd for the Mercy of God, and for his Forgiveness; we are not prepar'd for the Happiness of Heaven, and can have no Hopes to come thither. But if we prepare our selves as well as we can by *Repentance*, and Resolutions of being better, and by praying heartily and earnestly to God for his Grace, he will accept of this Preparation, and will give us the Comfort of this Holy *Sacrament*; the Neglect of which is one of the most Effectual Causes of the Decay of *Christian* Piety among us. Were it but frequented with that wise and due Preparation that it ought to be, 'twou'd doubtless be highly Instrumental to reform the World, and to make Men good in good Earnest. For besides that these Sacred *Elements* are by God's Institution become Moral Consequences of the Divine Grace, by which our good Resolutions are nourish'd and confirm'd; We have there represented openly to our Senses one of the greatest Arguments against Sin in all our Religion, the *Passion* and *Sacrifice* of our Blessed Saviour: He is there represented to our Eyes in all his *Wounds* and *Agonies*, bruis'd and broken for our Sins, and bleeding to expiate our Transgressions: How
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can every Christian help crying out in the Omission of this Duty,

Oh my Obdurate Heart! Canst thou behold this Tragical Spectacle without Indignation against thy Sins, which were the Cause of it? Does not thy Heart rise against thy Sins, whilst thou here behold'st him welt'ring in his Blood, and hearest those Gaping Wounds it issues from, proclaiming them his Assassins and Murderers? But if thou hast not Ingenuity enough to prompt thee to revenge thy Saviour's Quarrel upon these his Mortal Enemies, yet methinks Self-Love wou'd move thee not to be fond of thy Sins, when thou here beholdest how much the Son of God endur'd to expiate them: For how canst thou think of Sinning, without Trembling and Astonishment, who hast here before thy Eyes such a dreadful Example of God's Severity against it? Does it not strike thy Soul into an Agony, to behold this bloody Tragedy? In which the All-merciful Father, is represented so inexorably incens'd against thy Sins, that he who was the most innocent Person that ever was upon Earth, and the greatest Favourite that ever was in Heaven, cou'd not with all his Prayers and Tears obtain thy Pardon, without undergoing for thee the Bitter Agonies of a woful Death? Sure if thou hast any one Spark of Love in thee towards thy Saviour, or thy self, this solemn Commemoration of his Passion cannot but affect thee with Horror and Indignation against thy Sins.

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As in this great Solemnity we commemorate our Saviour's Passion, so we also renew the Vows of our Obedience to him; which is very instrumental in itself to the subduing of our Sins, but much more when 'tis done in so sacred a Manner. For as feasting upon Sacrifices was always us'd as a *Fæderal* Rite, both among the *Jews* and *Heathens*, whereby God and Man by *Eating* together, did mutually oblige themselves to one another: So the *Lord's Supper* being a Feast upon the Sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood; when we come thither, we Eat and Drink of his Sacrifice, and thereby devote our selves in the most solemn manner to his Service. We swear Allegiance to him upon his own Body and Blood, and take the *Sacrament* upon it that we will be his faithful Votaries. When we take the consecrated Symbols into our Hands, we make this solemn Dedication of our selves to God.

Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, our selves, our Souls and Bodies, to be a reasonable, Holy, and Lively Sacrifice unto thee; and here we call to Witness this Sacred Blood that redeem'd us, and these Vocal Wounds that interceded for us, that from henceforth we oblige our selves never to start from thy Service, what Difficulty soever we may encounter in it, and what Temptation soever we may have to forsake it.

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Now what can be a greater Restraint to us, when we are sollicit to any Evil, than such a solemn and sacred Obligation? Methinks the Sense of that dreadful Vow that is upon us, shou'd so over-awe us, that we should not be able to think of Sinning without Horror.

For, Lord, how shall I dare to cheat and defraud my Neighbour, when it was but the other Day that I vow'd to be Honeſt, and took the Sacrament upon it? With what Conſcience can I now hate or deſign Revenge againſt my Brother, when I ſo lately ſwore unto God upon the Body and Blood of my Saviour, that I would love and forgive all the World?

Surely if Men had any Senſe of God and Religion in them, they wou'd not be able, after ſuch Engagements, to look upon any Temptation to Sin without trembling; and whatever Pretences of Unworthineſs Men may make to keep themſelves from this Ordinance, I doubt not but the great Reason of their Neglect is this, that they love their Luſts, and are reſolv'd whatever comes of it, they will not part with them; They will not come to the Sacrament, becauſe they muſt reſolve to renounce them; which they are extreamly unwilling to do. And if this be their Reason, as 'tis to be fear'd it is, they are unworthy indeed, the more ſhame for them; but 'tis ſuch an Un-

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worthiness, as is so far from excusing their Neglect, that it is a foul Aggravation of it. For He who will not receive the *Sacrament*, because he will not renounce his Lusts, makes one Sin the Reason of another, and so pleads that for his Excuse which will be the Cause of his Condemnation. But if we are honestly resolv'd to part with all our Sins, and can but willingly devote them as *Sacrifices* to the *Altar*, we are sufficiently prepar'd for this great Solemnity, and shall be welcome Guests to the *Table* of our Lord. If we can sincerely pay our *Vows* at his Altar, we may confidently *take the Cup of Salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord*. And having thus chain'd up our *Lusts* by the Vows of Obedience we have paid there, it will be hard for them to shake off such mighty *Fetters*, or ever to get loose again from so strict a *Confinement*, especially if we take care to repeat this our *Sacramental Vow* as often as conveniently we can: For the frequent *Renewal* of our Holy Vows doth mightily tend to strengthen and reinforce them; and therefore 'tis worth observing, how much Care Christ has taken in the very Constitution of his Religion, to oblige us to a constant Repetition of our Vows and good Purposes: For at our first Entrance into *Covenant* with him, we are to be *Baptiz'd*; in which Solemnity we renounce the Devil and all his Works,

Works, and religiously devote our selves to his Service. But because we are apt to forget our Vow, and the Matter of it is continually to be perform'd, and more than one World depends upon it, therefore he has thought fit not to trust to our first Engagement, but so to Methodize our Religion, that we shou'd often be obliged to give him new Security: For which End he has Instituted this other *Sacrament*; which is not, like that of *Baptism*, to be receiv'd by Us once for all, but is to be frequently repeated, that so at every return of it we might be oblig'd again to renew our old *Vows* of Obedience. And doubtless, wou'd we but follow this good Design of our Saviour, we shou'd be far more successful in our Religion than we are: For till we come to a confirm'd State of Goodness, our Holy Fervour will be very apt to cool, our good Purposes to slacken and unwind, and our virtuous Endeavours to languish and grow weary; wherefore, unless we revive our Religion by frequent *Restoratives*, in a little time it will faint and dye away. To keep it alive 'tis very necessary to come to our great Master's *Table* every time we are invited, that here we may renew our *Vows*, and reinvigorate our *Resolutions*, and repair our *Decays*, and put our sluggish *Graces* into a new Fermentation. And if we wou'd thus often communicate
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with a due Preparation of Mind, we shou'd doubtless at every Sacrament require new Life and Vigor, and our good Resolutions wou'd ev'ry Day get ground of our bad Inclinations, till at last they had totally subdu'd them.

Let us further consider the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, as a part of Divine Worship, an Instrument of Holiness, and a Remedy against Temptation; and the incomparable Office of our Church has admirably expressed and reduced to a Method the whole Mind of the Gospel relating to this Matter. For which we have cause to bless God, in beholding and reverencing that Primitive Plainness, and truly Christian Spirit visible in it.

Our Lord's Supper, considered as an Act or Part of Religious Worship, contains an humble Acknowledgment of our Sins, a devout Profession of our Faith in Christ, that we are the Disciples of our crucify'd Saviour, and expect *Salvation* no other way than by that Sacrifice of his Body and Blood offered upon the *Cross*; and also contains a solemn Oblation of most humble and hearty Thanks to God for his inestimable Benefit, by bestowing his Son upon us to die for us; and to our Master and only Saviour Christ, for his exceeding great Love in dying for us. 'Tis further, a most solemn Oblation

lation of our Selves, Souls, and Bodies, to be a Holy, Lively, and Acceptable Sacrifice to God. Thus this *Sacrament* consists of a whole Constellation of Graces, *Repentance, Faith, Hope, Charity*: It is a nearer Approach to the Presence of God, and more solemn Exercise of the *Graces* of the *Gospel*, which gives a very fair Account of the Reason of its frequent Practice. For nothing can be a more effectual Instrument of Holiness, were it only on account of the Preparation necessary as a Condition of our Worthy Reception, which awakens our Souls, and refreshes all our *Graces*, mortifies all our sensual *Lusts*, and draws us nearer to Heaven. The Necessity of this Preparation, as the Church Office prescribes, appears from hence, that *Repentance, Faith, and Charity*, are absolutely necessary to enable a Man to exert those Effects before-mention'd, which constitute this *Sacrament*, consider'd as a Part of Divine Worship; and therefore to approach that Holy Table without a Soul so qualify'd, is to Affront and Mock the Majesty of Heaven.

The Exercise of our *Graces* in receiving, increases and improves them: That Act of Humble Adoration, and profound Prostration of our selves before God, under a Sense of his Bounty and Majesty, and our Sinfulness and Meanness; that lively Act
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of Faith by which our Souls profess a firm Belief of, and Dependance upon, the Death and Passion of our dear Lord and Saviour, for *Salvation*; that *Love* whereby the Soul offers its Praises, and its self a Sacrifice to God, leave such lively and lasting Impressions upon Men's Minds, as are not quickly nor easily effaced; and the Soul by the Delight it finds in exerting these *Graces*, is enkindled with a Desire of repeating the same Acts.

The *Sacrament* it self has a natural Tendency to promote Holiness, by its sensible Representations of a crucify'd *Saviour*. The *Symbols* themselves being fit to bring into our Minds the Pain and Sufferings of our dear Lord and Master, by that inward Grace inseparable from the worthy Reception of it, bestow'd upon us to refresh and strengthen our Souls, to root and confirm our Faith, to inflame our Love, and perfect our Hopes; by being a Pledge and Assurance to us of the Pardon of our Sins, thro' the Blood of Christ. 'Tis a new and repeated Engagement of our selves to the Service of Christ, to an Obedience to his Laws, and a Renunciation of those Enemies of Christians, the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*. From all which it is easie to infer, that it is a strong Fence and Antidote against Temptations: For these fresh Impressions

pressions of our Saviour's Love, the new Strengths of divine Grace, the Vigour of a new and solemn Engagement to Obedience, fill the Soul with a holy Zeal against Sin, and a glorious Contempt of sensual Pleasures.

And now, O my God! What should make me so prodigally vent'rous of my own Safety, as to neglect the frequent use of this holy Sacrament? Have I not need frequently to examine my self? Are not thy Graces apt to Wither and Decay, unless this Water'd and Refresh'd? Does not my Converse with the World, and my Communication with Flesh and Blood, render it necessary for me to renew my Resolutions against them as often as I can? Or is there not a holy Delight in the Exercise of all this, that surpasses all the Pleasures of a sensual Life? Is it not a Sacrifice that my Lord and Saviour is highly pleased with? Is it not reasonable, that I should oblige him who dy'd for me, with this frequent Acknowledgment of his infinite Love, evidenc'd in his Death? Pardon me, O my God, that I have been so ungrateful to Thee, so senseless of my own Welfare and Advantage. For the time to come I will delight in this holy Communion: I will often offer up my self a Sacrifice to Thee, and profess my Faith in a crucify'd Saviour, and thence beg thy Assistance and Conduct thro' the difficult Paths of this present Life. And oh my God! Accept then of my Addresses and Praises, thro' the infinite Mercies and Blood of Christ.

Before

Before we close our Considerations on this divine Subject, we must enquire into the Rise and Origin of this Mystery, and explain the Reason of its being establish'd as a principal Ordinance of Christianity.

Among the wonderful Works of Power and Grace, perform'd by God Almighty in favour of the Children of *Israel*, and in order to their Deliverance from the *Egyptian* Slavery, a most signal one was the destroying the First-Born of the *Egyptians*, and passing over the Houses of the *Children of Israel*. In which God declar'd his just Wrath against their cruel Oppressors, depriving them in a sudden and dreadful manner of what was nearest and dearest to them; and his gracious Mercy towards the *Israelites* in preserving what was alike dear to them from so woful a Calamity. Now that the Memory of so remarkable a Mercy might be preserv'd, that their Affections might be rais'd to a strong Sense of God's Goodness, and their Faith in him confirm'd, so as in the like Need to hope for the same favourable Help and Protection by the consideration of so notable an Experiment, it pleas'd God to appoint a *Sacrament*, or mysterious Rite, to be annually celebrated, representing and recalling to Mind that Act of God in which his special Kindness was so eminently demonstrated towards his People;

ple; looking forward however upon that other great Delivery from Sin and Hell, which God in Mercy discover'd to Mankind was to be attain'd by our Saviour; prefiguring, that the Souls of those that should be willing to forsake the spiritual Bondage of Sin, shou'd be sav'd from the Ruin coming upon them who wou'd abide therein: God regarding the Blood of our Saviour, that Immaculate Lamb sacrific'd for them, sprinkled upon the Doors of their Houses, that is by hearty Faith and Repentance apply'd to their Consciences. The Occasion of celebrating which holy Rite, our Saviour we see did improve to the Institution of this *Sacrament*; most agreeing with it in Design, as Representative and Commemorative of the greatest Blessing and Mercy we are capable of having vouchsafed to us. Some part of that ancient *Rite* or *Sacrifice*, which was most suitable to the special Purposes of this Institution, and most conformable to the general Constitution of the Christian Religion, by which all bloody *Sacrifices* are abolish'd, being retain'd in this.

The Action it self, or rather the whole *Rite*, consisting of several Actions, is plainly describ'd in the Gospels, distinguishable into these chief Parts; The *Benediction* and *Consecration*, (by *Prayer* and *Thanksgiving*) of *Bread* and *Wine*; the *Breaking of Bread*,
and

and handling the *Cup*, the Delivery and Distribution of them to the Persons present, the Declaration accompanying that Delivery; that those Symbolical Things and Actions do represent our Saviour's *Body* given and broken, our Saviour's *Blood* shed and pour'd out for us, in Sanction of the new Covenant; the actual partaking of these Symbols, by eating the *Bread* and drinking the *Wine*, done by all present. These things we find done at the first Institution, and exemplary Practice of this holy Ceremony, which our Saviour oblig'd us to imitate, saying, *Do this in remembrance of me*. There follows in St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* presently after the Narration concerning these Particulars, *And having sung a Hymn they went to the Mount of Olives*; which Action was indeed in it self proper to conclude the Practice of this holy *Rite*; yet what Reference it has towards it, cannot thence be determin'd: However, with these the Church has always join'd several Acts of *Devotion*, *Confession*, *Prayers*, *Praises*, *Thanksgivings*, *Intercessions*, *Vows*, suitable to the Nature and Design of the *Sacrament*, to glorifie God and edifie the Faithful in the Celebration of it.

Such is the Practice it self instituted and enjoin'd by our *Saviour*; the mysterious Importance of it, as we find it explain'd in
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holy Scripture, that only solid and sure Ground upon which we can build the Explication of supernatural Mysteries, consists chiefly in these Particulars.

It was intended for a *Commemorative* Representation of our Saviour's *Passion* for us; fit to mind us of it, to move us to consider it, to beget Affection in us suitable to the Memory and Consideration of it: *To tell forth the Death of our Lord till he come*, or during his Absence. The Suffering of our Saviour, the most wonderful Act of Goodness and Charity that ever was perform'd in the World, which produc'd Effects of highest Consequence to our Benefit, shou'd very frequently be present to our Thoughts and Affections; and that it may be so with Advantage, such a solemn and sensible Representation of it is very conducive, in which we behold him crucify'd as it were in *Effigy*, his Body broken, his Blood pour'd out for us, it being in a sort a putting us into the Circumstances of those who beheld our Saviour for us hanging upon the *Cross*. Our Lord being absent in *Body* from us, sitting at the Right Hand of the Father in Heaven; to supply that Absence, and that we shou'd not be apt to forget him, and thereby become wholly estrang'd from him, is pleased to order this Occasion of being present, and conversing with us, in such a manner as
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may retain in our Memories his gracious Performances for us, may impress in our Hearts a kindly Sense of them, may raise us up in Affection and Mind to him.

The Benefits consequent upon our Saviour's *Passion* rightly apprehended, heartily believ'd, seriously consider'd by us, are hereby lively represented, and effectually convey'd, to the Sustenance and Nourishment of our Spiritual Life, and the Refreshment and Comfort of our Souls. It is a Holy Feast, a Spiritual Repast, a Divine Entertainment, to which God in kindness invites us, to which if we come with well disposed Minds, he there feeds us with most Holy and Delicious Viands, with Heavenly *Manna*, with most reviving and cherishing Liquor. *Bread* is the *Staff of Life*, the most common, most necessary, most wholesome, and most savoury *Meat*. *Wine* is the most pleasant, most wholesome, most sprightly and cordial *Drink*. By them therefore our Lord chose to represent that *Body* and *Blood*, by the Oblation of which a Capacity of Life and Health was procur'd to Mankind; the taking in which by right Apprehension, tasting it by hearty Faith, digesting it by careful Attention and Meditation, converting it to our Substance by devout, grateful, and holy Affections, joyn'd with serious and steady Resolutions of living

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answerable thereto, will certainly support and maintain our spiritual Life, in a vigorous Health, and happy growth of Grace, refreshing our Hearts with unspeakable Comfort and Satisfaction. *He that doth thus, eats our Saviour's Flesh, and drinks his Blood,* that is, he, who as our Saviour interprets it, *doth believe in him*; that Belief importing all other Acts of Mind and Will connected, with right Perswasions concerning him, *both eternal Life and shall live for ever*, as himself declares and promises; which Benefits therefore are convey'd to us in the due performance of this holy Duty.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper declares that Union, which good Christians partaking of it, have with Christ; their Myttical Insertion into him by a close Dependence upon him for spiritual Life, Mercy, Grace, and Salvation; a constant adherence to him by Faith and Obedience; a near Conformity to him in Mind and Affection; an inseparable Conjunction with him by the strictest Bonds of Fidelity, and by the most endearing Relations; which Things cou'd not more fitly be set out, than by partaking of our best and most necessary Food, which being taken in, soon becomes united to us, assimilated and converted into our Substance, thereby renewing our Strength, and repairing the Decays of Nature: wherefore,

fore, *He, says our Saviour, that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, abideth in me and I in him.* And, says St. Paul, *The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?* We in the outward Action partake of the Symbols representing our Saviour's Body and Blood: We in the spiritual Intentions *communicate* of his very Person, being, according to the Manner insinuated, intimately united to him.

By this *Sacrament* consequently is signify'd and seal'd that *Union* which is among our Saviour's true Disciples *communicating* therein; their being together united in consent of Mind and Unity of Faith, in mutual Good-will and Affection, in Hope and Tendency to the same blessed End; in spiritual Brotherhood and Society, especially upon Account of their *Communion* with Christ, which most closely ties them to one another. They partaking of this individual Food, become translated as it were with one Body and Substance; *Seeing, says St. Paul, we being many are one Bread and one Body, for all of us do partake of one Bread.*

In the representing, producing, and promoting these things, we are taught that the *Mystery* of this *Sacrament* consists. It was design'd as a proper and efficacious Instrument

ment to raise in us pious Affections towards our God, and gracious Redeemer; to dispose us to all Holy Practice; to confirm our Faith; to nourish our Hope; to quicken our Resolutions of walking carefully in the Ways of Duty; to unite us more firmly to our Saviour, and to combine us in Charity one towards another. The accomplishing of which Intents of it, supposes our faithful and diligent Concurrence in the Use of it; whence arise many Duties incumbent upon us in respect to it, some Antecedent, some Concomitant, and some Consequent to this Duty.

Before we address our selves to the partaking of this venerable *Mystery*, we shou'd consider whither we are going, what is the Nature and Importance of the Action we set our selves about when we are approaching to our *Lord's Table*: So the Apostle calls it: To come into his more especial Presence, to be entertain'd by him with the dearest Welcome, and the best Cheer that can be; to receive the fullest Testimonies of his Mercy, and the surest Pledges of his Favour toward us; that we are going to behold our Lord in tenderest Love, offering up himself a Sacrifice to God therein, undergoing the sorest Pains and foulest Disgraces for our Good and Salvation; that we ought therefore to bring with us Dispo-

sitions of Soul suitable to such an Access, to such an Intercourse with our gracious Lord. Had we the Honour and Favour to be invited to the *Table* of a great Prince, what especial Care should we have to dress our Bodies in a clean and decent Garb, to compose our Minds in order to Expressions of all due Respect to him, to bring nothing about us noisome or ugly, that might offend his Sight or displease his Mind? The like surely, and greater Care we should apply, when we thus being call'd, go into God's Presence and *Communion*. We should in Preparation for it, with all our Power, endeavour to cleanse our Souls from all Impurity of Thought and Desire; from all Iniquity and Perverseness, from all Malice, Envy, Hatred, Anger, and all such Evil Dispositions, which are most offensive to God's all-piercing Sight, and unbecoming his glorious Presence; we should dress our selves with all those comely Ornaments of Grace, with *Purity, Humility, Meekness, and Charity*, which will render us acceptable and well-pleasing to him. We should compose our Minds into a Frame of Reverence and awful regard of God, into a lowly, calm, and tender Disposition of Heart, apt to express all the Respect due to his Presence, fit to admit the gracious Illapses of his Holy Spirit, very susceptible of all Holy and
Heavenly

Heavenly Affections, which are suitable to such a *Communion*, or may spring from it. We should therefore renounce and abandon, not only all vicious Inclinations, and evil Purposes, but even all worldly Cares, Desires, and Passions, which may distract or discompose us, that may make us dull and heavy, that may cause us to behave our selves indecently or unworthily before God, or any way bereave us of the excellent Fruits of so blessed an Entertainment.

To these Purposes we should, according to St. *Paul's* Advice, examine and approve our selves, considering our past Actions, and our present Inclinations. And accordingly, by serious Meditation, and fervent Prayer to God for his gracious Assistance therein, work our Souls into a hearty Remorse of our past Miscarriages, and a sincere Resolution to amend for the future; forsaking all Sin, endeavouring in all our Actions to serve and please God, *purging out the old Leaven of Vice and Wickedness*, that we may Feast and Celebrate this *Passover*, in which Christ is mystically Sacrific'd for us, in the *unleaven'd* Dispositions of *Sincerity* and *Truth*. Such are the *Duties* previous to our partaking this *Sacrament*.

Those which accompany it are, a reverent and devout Affection of Heart, with

a suitable Behaviour therein; an awful Sense of Mind befitting the Majesty of that Presence wherein we appear; answerable to the Greatness, Goodness, and Holiness of him with whom we converse; becoming the Sacredness of those Mysteries which are exhibited to us, which *St. Paul* calls a *discerning* or distinguishing *our Lord's Body*: A Devotion of Heart, consisting in hearty Contrition for our Sins, which exposed our Saviour to the enduring such Pains there *remember'd*; in firm Resolution to forsake the like hereafter, as Injurious, Dishonourable, and Displeasing to Him; in fervent Love of him, as full of such wonderful Goodness and Charity towards us, in most hearty Thankfulness for those unconceivably Great Expressions of Kindness towards us, in deepest Humility from a Sense of our *Unworthiness*, to receive such Testimonies of Grace and Favour from him: *We are Unworthy to eat the Crumbs that fall from his Table*; how much more to be admitted into such Degrees of honourable Communion, Familiarity of close Cunion and Union with him; our Devotion shou'd therefore consist partly in a joyful Consideration of the excellent Privileges herein imparted, and of the blessed Fruits accruing to us from his gracious Performances; in a comfortable Hope of obtaining

taining and enjoying the Benefits of his *Obedience* and *Passion*, by the Assistance of his Grace; in steady Faith and full Persuasion of Mind that he is (supposing our dutiful Compliance) ready to bestow upon us all the Blessings then exhibited; in attentively fixing the Eyes of our Minds and all the Powers of our Soul, our Understanding, Will, Memory, Fancy, Affection upon him, as willingly pouring forth his Life for our Salvation; in Motions of enlarg'd Good-will and Charity towards all our Brethren for his Sake, in obedience to his Will, and Imitation of him. Thus shou'd our Souls be dress'd when we present our selves at Christ's Table, and partake of this Holy *Sacrament*.

But when we have even thus Eaten of that Bread, and Drank of that Cup, we must not imagine that our Work is over; there are yet many great but comfortable Duties incumbent on us afterward; we must cherish all pious Inclinations and Affections, and labour to make them bring forth still more goodly Fruits of Obedience; we must thoroughly digest that Spiritual Nourishment by becoming more firmly knit to our Saviour by higher Degrees of Faith and Love; by maintaining a more lively Sense of his super-abundant Goodness; by cherishing

those Influences of Grace which descend upon our Hearts in this *Communion*, and by improving them to nearer Degrees of Perfection in all Piety and Virtue; we must be very careful to approve our selves in some measure worthy of that great Honour and Favour which God has vouchsafed us, in admitting us to so near Approaches to himself; we must firmly adhere to those Resolutions, perform those Vows, and make good those Engagements, which in so solemn a Manner, upon so great an Occasion we made, and offered up to our God and Saviour. We must consider, that by the Breach of such Resolutions, by the Violation of such Engagements, our Sins receiving such mighty Aggravation of vain Inconstancy and wicked Perfidiousness, our Guilt will be mightily increased; Our Souls relapsing into so grievous a Distemper, our Spiritual Strength will be exceedingly impaired; consequently hence our true Comforts will be abated, our best Hopes will be shaken, our Eternal State will be desperately endangered.

There is one Duty concerning this *Sacrament* which we must not forbear touching, and that is, our gladly embracing any Opportunity presented, for *communicating* therein; the doing so being not only our Duty, but a great Aid and Instrument of *Piety*,
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the neglecting it a grievous Sin, and productive of great Mischiefs to us.

The Primitive Christians did very frequently use it, partaking therein, as it seems, at every time of their Meeting for God's Service. St. *Luke* says of them, *They continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Communion, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer.* And *when you meet together, it is not*, as according to the Intent and Duty of Meeting it shou'd be, *to eat the Lord's Supper*, says St. *Paul*. And *Justin Martyr* in his second Apology, discoursing of the Religious Service of God in their *Assemblies*, mentions it as a constant Part of it. *Epiphanius* reports it a Custom in the Church, deriv'd from the Apostolical Institution, to celebrate the *Eucharist* thrice every Week, that is, so often as they met to pray and praise God; which Practice may well be conceived a great Means of kindling and preserving in them that Holy Fervour of Piety which they so illustriously exprest in their Conversation, and in their gladson Suffering for Christ's Sake. The remitting of that Frequency, as it is certainly a Sign and an Effect so in Part it may be reckon'd a Cause of the Degeneracy of *Christian* Practice, into that great Coldness and Slackness which afterward seiz'd upon it, and now does appa-

rently keep it in a languishing and half-dying State.

The rarer Occasions therefore we now have of performing this Duty (the which indeed was always esteem'd the principal Office of God's Service; and the being depriv'd of which was also deem'd the greatest Punishment and Infelicity that cou'd be Inflicted on, or befall a *Christian*) the more ready we shou'd be to embrace them. If we dread God's Displeasure; if we value our Lord and his Benefits; if we tender the Life, Health, and Welfare of our Souls, we shall not neglect it: For how can we but grievously offend God by such extreme Rudeness, that when he kindly invites us to his Table, we are averse from coming thither, or utterly refuse? That when he calls us into his Presence we run from him, that when he with his own Hand offers us inestimable Mercies and Blessings, we reject them? It is not only the breach of God's Command who enjoin'd us to *do this*, but a direct Contempt of his Favour and Goodness, most clearly and largely exhibited in this Office. And how can we bear any Regard to our Lord, or be anywise sensible of his gracious Performances in our Behalf, if we are unwilling to joyn in thankful and joyful Commemorations of them? How lit-

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tle do we love our own Souls, if we suffer them to pine and starve for want of that Food which God here dispenses for their Sustenance and Comfort? If we bereave them of enjoying so high a Privilege, so inestimable a Benefit, so incomparable Pleasures, as are to be found and felt in this Service, or spring and flow from it, What reasonable Excuse can we frame for such Neglect? Are we otherwise employ'd? What Business can there be more important than serving God and saving our own Souls? Is it Wisdom, in pursuance of any the greatest Affair here, to disregard the principal Concern of our Souls? Do we think our selves unfit and unworthy to appear in God's Presence? But is any Man unworthy to obey God's Commands? Is any Man unfit to implore and partake of God's Mercy if he be not unwilling to do it? what Unworthiness shou'd hinder us from remembering our Lord's excessive Charity towards us, and thanking him for it? from praying for his Grace; from resolving to amend our Lives? Must we, because we are unworthy, continue so still, by shunning the Means of correcting and curing us? Must we increase our Unworthiness by transgressing our Duty? If we esteem Things well, the Consciousness of our Sinfulness shou'd rather

ther drive us to it as to our Medicine, than detain us from it. There is no Man indeed who must not conceive and confess himself unworthy, therefore must no Man come thither at God's Call? If we have a Sense of our Sins, and a Mind to leave them; if we have a Sense of God's Goodness, and a Heart to thank him for it, we are so worthy that we shall be kindly received there, and graciously rewarded. If we will not take a little care to work these Dispositions in our selves, we are indeed unworthy; but the being so from our own perverse Negligence, is a bad Excuse for the Neglect of our Duty; he, who with an honest Meaning, tho' with an imperfect Devotion, addresses himself to the performance of this most Holy Part of God's Worship, is far more excusable than he who declines it upon what Score soever; no scrupulous Shyness can ward us from Blame. What then shall we say, if supine Sloth, or profane Contempt, are the Causes of such Neglect?

I shall not here meddle with a Controversy started by some Casuists; Whether the prostituting this Holy *Sacrament* to any Worldly Interests, or enforcing it upon Accounts merely Political, is justifiable from Scripture, or the Nature of this Sacred Institution. The Ladies have not been much exposed

exposed to the Temptation of unworthy receiving the Lord's Supper, to qualifie them for some Post of Honour or Profit in this Transitory Life; and therefore I shall leave such Enquiries to others, and content my self with what has been said of the Importance and Necessity of the constant Exercise of this Duty.

**ZEAL**



Z E A L.



WHAT a Noble Subject is this? And yet alas! how has it lately been mistaken and abused? Here the Heroick Acts, or what is more, the Heroick *Lives* of *Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors*, present themselves to my Thoughts. Here Human Nature enrich'd, adorn'd, and elevated to the utmost Degree, by a participation of the Divine one: Here the Power of God's Word; the Energy of the Holy Ghost; the Triumphs of *Faith*; and the Extasies of Love, might be describ'd. Here the different Excellencies of different Virtues; and the different Value of good Works should be stated and settled; and the various Paths in which Men pursue the Height of Virtue, and the noblest Designs be examin'd; and solid Piety and true Wisdom be refin'd from the Alloys and Mixtures of Enthusiasm, Superstition, Fancy, or whatever else they are disfigur'd or debas'd by.

I do not exclude some Degrees of Zeal from every Period of the Christian's Life. Sincerity cannot subsist wholly without it: *The Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*, which is the Subject of one of our Saviour's Beatitudes, must be more or less in every Child of God. But it may signify one Thing in the *Infant*, another in the *Adult* Christian: In the one, the Conquest of *Sin*, or rather of the Relicks and Remains of former sinful Habits, and the Attainment of Habitual Goodness, is the Object of this *Hunger and Thirst*. In the other it imports a vehement Desire of whatever is yet wanting to a farther Accomplishment and Consummation of Righteousness already fix'd and establish'd; the entire and ultimate Perfection of it in Heaven; and in the mean time the promoting the Divine Glory upon *Earth*, whatever it cost him to do so. By a State of *Zeal* then I here mean Virtue or Holiness, not in the *Bud* or in the *Blossom*, but in its full Strength and Stature, grown up and ripe, and loaded with Blessed Fruits: That Holiness I mean which is the Result of *Illumination*, or Clearness of Judgment, of the Strength and Force of holy Resolution, and the Vigor and Energy of holy Passions; that solid, spiritual, and operative Religion, which may be felt and enjoy'd

joy'd by us our selves, in the Serenity and Tranquillity of Conscience, the Longings and Breathings of Pious Desires, the Joys and Pleasures of a Rational Assurance, discern'd by the World in our Lives and Actions, in the Modesty of our Garb, in the Plainness and Humility of all Things else that pertain to this Part of Life; in the Temperance of our Meats, the Purity and Heavenliness of our Conversation, the Moderation of our Designs and Enjoyments, the Instruction of our Families, with a Tender and indefatigable Watchfulness over them; the Constancy of our Attendance upon, and the Devoutness of our Deportment in the Publick Worship of God; and lastly, in the Activity and Generosity of our Charity; or to speak my Thoughts in the Language of *St. Paul*, a State of *Zeal* is that Perfection or Maturity of Holiness which abounds *in the Works of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.* Now the End of all this is the Advancing the Glory of God; and therefore *Zeal* is well enough describ'd or defin'd by an ardent or vehement Desire of doing so, either by our Holiness, or by the Fruit of of it, *Good Works.* Of both which I will speak a little more particularly.

Of

Of that *Perfection* of *Holiness* which constitutes this *Zeal*, Two Things are to be enquired into :

Whether the *Perfect Man* must be possess'd of all the Treasures of Goodness : Whether he must be adorn'd with a Confluence and an Accumulation of all Virtue.

What Height of *Virtue*, what Degree of *Holiness* he may be suppos'd to be arriv'd at.

For the *Extent* of *Righteousness* ; it is generally thought, Universality is as essential and necessary a Property of Gospel-*Righteousness* as Sincerity and Perseverance ; That there is an Inseparable Connexion and Union between all Christian Virtues ; that he who wants any, must be concluded to have none. This Want being not like a Blemish which diminishes the Beauty, or a Strain that weakens the Strength ; but like a Wound, that dissolves the Frame and Contexture of the Natural Body. This Opinion is partly built upon Reason, which tells us that there is a native Lustre and Beauty in all Virtues ; and therefore there is no One in the whole System of *Morality* but must be lovely and amiable to a Good Man ; partly upon Scripture, in which we find the Christian represented as *Holy in all manner of Conversation, Perfect in every Good Work, as fill'd with all the Fulness of God, as fruitful in every Good Work,*
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and exhorted in the most comprehensive Terms imaginable to the Practice of every Virtue. *Finally Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good report: If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these Things.* To which may be added the numerous Texts, importing, that *Faith* is a Principle of Universal *Righteousness*; that the Fear and Love of God do equally oblige us to all his Commandments; and that the Violation of one involves us in the Guilt of all. The Result of all which seems to be plainly this, that the whole Chain of Graces is dissolv'd and lost, if there be but one Link wanting. But at this Rate, as the *Sincere* Man must be endow'd with all manner of Virtues, so must the Perfect excel in all. Which *Assertions*, if we closely consider both the One and the Other, seem to have in them insuperable Difficulties. There is a vast Variety in the Natures of Men, in the States and Conditions of Life, and in the Kinds and Degrees, as well of the Sanctifying, as of the Miraculous Gifts of God. *St. Paul* tells us, *Every Man has his proper Gift of God.* From whence we may naturally infer, That every Man is not capable of attaining to an Excellence and Eminence in every Virtue; Experience
tells

tells us, That there are different Kinds of *Natures* as well as *Soils*; and that some Kinds of *Virtue*, like some Kinds of *Seeds*, will thrive better in one than in another. Nor does *Grace* alter the *Matter* much, since it generally accommodates it self to *Nature*. It seems very hard, that every *Man* should have the *Virtues* of all *Men*, of all *States* and all *Capacities*, every particular *Member* the *Virtues* of the whole *Church*. The *Beauty* and *Strength* of the *Church*, as well as of the natural *Body* or *Commonwealth*, consisting not in the *All-sufficiency* of every *Member*, but in that *Variety* of *Gifts* and *Graces* that cements and unites, enriches and supports the whole. To come up to the *Matter of Fact*: I read of the *Faith* of *Abraham*, the *Meekness* of *Moses*, the *Patience* of *Job*, the *Love* of *Mary Magdalen*, the *Zeal* of *St. Peter*, and the *Labours* and *Travels* of *St. Paul*; which *Firmness* and *Constancy* is too mean a Name for. These *Virtues* seem therefore to have been the *peculiar* Excellencies of those Persons; and to have shone in them with more *Transcendent Lustre* than any other: These seem to have been the *Virtues* for which *Nature* and *Grace* eminently qualify'd them, and to which the *Providence* of *God* more immediately and directly call'd them. All this consider'd, seems it not enough to come to the *Perfection* of these great

great Men? May it not suffice to excel in these Virtues, which Nature, Grace, and Providence prescrib'd? May not the *perfect* be allow'd to want what he does not need? Wou'd one not think, that in many Respects it were enough for him to be free from this or that Vice, rather than to expect that he shou'd be adorn'd with this or that Virtue which he has no Use for? Especially if by Virtue we understand strictly such a Habit as enables us to act easily and delightfully.

The *Perfect Man* must not only be set free from the Dominion of Sin, but also abstain even from a single Act of presumptuous Wickedness: He must neither criminally *omit* a Duty, nor deliberately commit any thing repugnant to it.

He must be endow'd with Spiritual *Wisdom* and *Understanding*, with *Faith*, *Hope*, *Charity*, with the *Graces* which are call'd *Universal*, because Necessary and Indispensable to all as Christians, abstracting from their particular Capacities and Relations, and that too in an eminent Degree, so as to be *strong in the Grace which is in Jesus Christ*. *This will render him Holy in all manner of Conversation, and thoroughly furnish'd to all Good Works*. These two Things constitute *Universal Righteousness*, compleat the *Perfect Man*, and fully satisfy the Texts alledg'd.

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He must excel in those *Virtues* which are most *natural*; those *Virtues* are call'd *Natural*, to which Grace and Nature most powerfully dispose and incline him; For these he seems to be design'd by God; these will soon grow up to Maturity, and much will be their Fruit, and great their Beauty. It is not suppos'd all this while, that the *Perfect Man* ought not so far to subdue and rectifie his Temper, as not only to overcome the Sin of his *Constitution*, but in some degree possess the Virtue that is most repugnant to it. But to expect him to be Eminent here, is too hard and unreasonable. For here, when he has bestow'd much Pains and Travel, much Care and Cost, his Progress may not be so much as where he bestow'd least.

Let no Man mistake contracted *Habits* for *Nature*, and then conclude that it will be impossible for him to attain the Perfection of this or that Virtue, through a natural Incapacity. Let no Man satisfy and content himself in a weak and impotent State of that Virtue which is directly oppos'd to the Sin of his *Constitution*, but let him think that here, or any-where, his Virtue must be always growing, and let him not doubt but that our Saviour's Promise, as far as it can be accomplish'd upon Earth, belongs to his sincere Endeavour here; *Blessed are they that*
hunger

hunger and thirst after Rightousness, for they shall be filled.

The *Perfect Man* must be Eminent in those Virtues which are most *necessary*; such are those which his particular Calling and Station, or any other Dispensation of Providence he is under, require of Him. Whatever Virtues may be more *delightful*, these are more *important*; others may be more *natural*; these have more of *Use*, and more of *Merit*. A Man may fall short of *Perfection* in others, without either *Disparagement* or *Guilt*; but Deficiency in these can hardly escape both. Besides, every Thing is lovely in its Place, and in its Time. There is a peculiar Grace and Lustre that attends the Virtues of a Man's Station, that is scarcely to be found in any other. I wou'd therefore have my *perfect Man* truly great in his own Business, and shine with a dazzling Lustre in his own Sphere. To this purpose surely speaks the Advice of St. Paul, *Having then Gifts differing according to the Grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the Proportion of Faith; or Ministry, let us wait on our Ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity; He that ruleth, with Diligence; He that sheweth Mercy, with Chearfulness.*

As

As there is a different *Guilt* in *Sins*, so there are different *Merits* in *Virtue*. As amongst miraculous, so amongst sanctifying Gifts, some are more excellent than others; and he is the most perfect Man, who is enriched with the most *perfect* Gifts. The three heroick Virtues of the Gospel are, *Faith*, *Love* and *Humility*. Nor do I presumptuously, contrary to the Apostle, exclude *Hope*, but comprehend it under *Faith*. Of *Faith*, *Humility*, and *Love*, we have treated in the preceding Chapters, and have here consider'd the Extent or Compass of the *perfect* Man's Virtues; and the *Sum total* is, In some he must excel, because naturally and easie; in others, because necessary: Universal ones he cannot want; they are essential to *Christianity*: Others of a peculiar Nature he may, unless his Circumstances exact them. Nor is this any Diminution of his Perfection. *Patience*, *Fortitude*, *Moderation*, and *Vigilance*, &c. are the Virtues of Earth not Heaven; and yet none think the blessed Inhabitants of that Place imperfect, because not endowed with Habits which they do not want. Above all, he that will be *perfect* must abound in those Graces, which are of the most Heroick Nature, *Faith*, *Love*, and *Humility*. For these are they which most effectually exalt Man above himself, and above the World,

World, which inflame him with a *Zeal* for the Honour of God, and Good of Men, and enable him to surmount the Difficulties he meets with, in prosecuting this glorious Design.

I am next to enquire to what *Height*, to what *Degrees* of Virtue the *perfect Man* may arrive. Reason and Scripture seem to prels us on towards an endless Progress in Virtue: Yet both seem to propose to us such a *State* of *Perfection* as attainable, beyond which we cannot go; that so the *Beginner* may not despair of *Perfection*, nor the *Perfect* abate any Thing of their Vigilance and their Industry. Such a Degree of Excellence, to which nothing can be added, such a Height above which there is no room to *soar*, if apply'd to Man in this World, is surely but an imaginary Notion. To dream of such a *Perfection* were to forget our Nature, and our State. No Sagacity of Judgment, no Strength of Resolution, no Felicity of Circumstances, can ever advance us to this *Height*. Such a *Perfection* as this, which is incapable of any Increase, belongs to God alone, and must certainly be deny'd in Man: In whom one would think the Appetites of the Body can never be so entirely subdu'd, that there should be no Place to extend his Conquest, or render his Victory more entire and complete:

pleat: And in whom one would think the Spirit of God should never reside in that Measure, that there should be nothing to be added to his *Fulness*. 'Tis hard to conceive how we should study the System of divine Faith; how we should daily reflect upon our Lives and Actions, without growing in spiritual Wisdom and Understanding. 'Tis hard to conceive how we should give God, the World, and our selves, repeated Proofs of our Integrity in the Day of *Trial*, without *increasing* our Strength and Assurance. And Love must naturally *increase* with these; whence it is that St. Paul, acknowledging himself not yet *Perfect*, resolves, *That forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forwards to those things that are before, he would press on towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

If we come to *Faith* and *Practice*, one would be tempted to think that the *Disciples* of our Lord and Master had arriv'd at that State, wherein their Business was not climbing higher, but rather to make good the Ground they had gain'd; which would render St. Paul's Victory over the Body more compleat, who assures us, *I am crucify'd with Christ: And again, I am crucify'd to the World, and the World is crucify'd to me.* What could render the Authority and Dominion of his

Mind more absolute, or its Graces more consummate and entire, who could say with Truth, *'Tis not I who live, but Christ who lives in me?* What would you have added to that *Faith and Love*, which made him ready *not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem*; which made him long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? As to those Words of his, *Forgetting those Things that are behind, and reaching forwards, &c.* they relate to his Trials and Performances, to his Perils and Conflicts, not to his Attainments. He does not here deny himself to be *Perfect*, tho' that might well enough have become his Modesty and Humility, but only that he was not to look upon himself as already at his Goal, a Conqueror, and crown'd; there being much yet behind to do and suffer, notwithstanding all that he had past thro'.

If we consult Reason, will it not be apt to tell us, That as every Being has its Bounds set it; so has every Perfection too? That there is a *Stature*, as of the *Natural*, so of the *Spiritual* Man, beyond which it cannot grow? That as to Grace, no more can be infus'd, than our Natures are capable of? Otherwise, like too rich a Cordial it will not strengthen but fire our Natures; or like too dazzling a Light, it will not assist but oppress our Faculties. And does not the

the Parable of our Master countenance this, wherein he tells us, That God gave to one Five Talents, to another Two, to another One; to every Man according to his *Ability*? By which one would think our Lord insinuates, that the Measures of *Grace* are usually distributed in Proportion to the Capacities of Nature; and that he who improv'd his Two *Talents* into Four, arrived at his proper *Perfection*, as well as he who improv'd his Five into *Ten*: It being as absurd to expect, that the *Perfection* of every Man should be the same, as to expect that all Men's *Bodies* should be of the same Height, or their Minds of the same Capacity. Reflecting on all this together, one cannot but be of Opinion, that some have actually arrived at that Strength of *Faith*, at that Ardor of *Love*, that they seem'd to have been uncapable of any considerable *Accessions* in this Life. But yet new Occasions may still demand new Virtues: Which were indeed before contain'd and included in *Faith* and *Love*, as Fruits and Trees are in their Seeds. Some Degree of original Corruption may still be lurking in the most sanctify'd Nature, and some venial Defects and Imperfections or other, may still leave room for the greatest of Saints to extend his Conquest. Besides, 'tis hard to deter-

mine or fix the Bounds of Knowledge, and every Degree of Light makes way for more. After all, nothing hinders but that the Path of the *perfect Man* may as well with respect to his *Righteousness* as his *Fortunes*, be like the *shining Light*, which shines more and more, unto the *perfect Day* of a *blessed Eternity*.

The *Motives* to *Perfection*, the Fruit of it, the Means and Method of attaining it, having been thus discours'd of, we proceed to consider *Zeal* as it consists in *good Works*. And now let not any one think, that Pains have been taken to advance the Illumination of a Sinner, to knock off his Chains and Fetters, to raise him as far as may be above the Corruption of Nature, and the Defects and Infirmities of Life, to scatter those lazy Fogs and Mists which hung upon his Spirits, and to enrich him with heroic Virtues: Let no Man, I say, fancy that we have been labouring to do all *this*, that after all my *perfect Man* may sit down like an *Epicurean God*, and enjoy himself; might talk finely of solitary Shades and Gardens, and spend a precious Life fitted for the noblest Designs, in a sluggish Retirement. No, no, as *Virtue* is the *Perfection* of human Life, so is *Action* the *Perfection* of *Virtue*; and *Zeal* is that *Principle of Action* which is requir'd in a *Saint* of God. Accordingly

cordingly the Scripture describes this great, this happy Man, as *full of the Holy Ghost, fervent in Spirit, zealous of Good Works*: Such a one was *Moses, mighty in Word and Deed*, as well as *learned in all the Knowledge of the Egyptians*: Such a one was *St. Stephen*, as full of divine Ardor and irresistible Fer- vency of Spirit, as of an irresistible Wis- dom: And such a one was the excellent *Cornelius, a devout Man*, one who had trans- fus'd the Fear of God from his own Bosom, throughout his Family and Relations, and Friends too; *One that gave much Alms, and prayed to God always*. What need we multi- ply Instances? This is that which distin- guishes the *perfect Man* from all others; the *Victories of Faith*, the *Labours of Charity*, the *Constancy and Patience of Hope*, and the *Ardors of Devotion*.

Need we here distinguish the Zeal of God, from the *Fierceness of Faction*, of which we have seen and felt the terrible Effects; from the Cruelty of Superstition, from the wake- ful and indefatigable Activity of *Avarice* and *Ambition*; from the unruly Heats of Pride and Passion, and from the implacable Fury of Revenge? It needs not; no foolish, no false, fantastick, earthly or devilish Princi- ple, can counterfeit *Divine Zeal*. 'Tis a *Perfection* that shines with such a peculiar Lu-

stre, with such an heavenly Majesty and Sweetness, that nothing else can imitate it. 'Tis always pursuing Good, the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Man. *It contends earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*: But it contends as earnestly too, to root out Wickedness, and implant the Righteousness of the Gospel in the World. It is not eager for the *Articles* of a *Seet* or *Party*, and unconcerned for Catholick ones. We have had of late such distinguish'd Instances of false *Zeal*, that one can hardly now mistake it for the true. False *Zeal* glares with warm Words; 'tis full of Froth and Foam, but spends it self in Professions, and never appears in Actions. He who makes most Noise with his *Zeal*, if his Life be examin'd, will be found wanting in the Essentials of Religion: He is in a mighty Concern for the Outsides of it; but takes no Care to adorn the Doctrine he professes by his good Works. *True Zeal* will ever be accompany'd with *Charity* and *Humility*, which are inseparable from it. And whoever pretends to the one without the other, is an Impostor. His *Zeal* is counterfeit, his Morals will belye his Principles; and he is of the Family of him who is the Father of Falshood, the Devil. When *true Zeal* presses for Reformation, it begins

at Home, and sets a bright *Example*. Look into the Lives of our most furious Zealots, who are ever breathing Fire and Flame, and see how their Actions answer their Professions. True Zeal is meek and gentle under its own Affronts, but warm and bold against those which are offer'd to God. Is the Zeal of our Age of this Kind? What are our Zealots most concerned for; their own Power and Interests, or the Glory of God? Try them by that Standard, bring them to that Touchstone, and you will soon know how to separate the Goats from the Sheep. Though Love fills the *Sails* of a holy Zeal, divine Wisdom and Prudence give it *Ballast*; and as a very Learned Doctor of our Church phrases it, *It has no Heat but what is tempered and refracted by Humility and Charity*: Virtues which are in these our Days never met with in the Composition of that Zeal, which carries with it all the Merit, all the Honour, and all the Reward.

Need we in the next Place fix and state the various Degrees of Zeal? Alas! it is not requisite, Zeal being nothing else but an ardent Thirst of promoting the divine Glory by the *best Works*. 'Tis plain, the more excellent the Work, and the more it costs, the more *perfect*, the more exalted the Zeal that performs it. When like *Mary*

we quit the Cumber and Distraction of this World, and chuse Religion for our Portion, then do we love it in good earnest! When with the Disciples we can say, *Lord, we have forsaken all and followed Thee, or are ready to do so*; when we are continually blessing and praising God; when if the Necessities of Christ's Church require it, we are ready to call *nothing our own*; when we are prepar'd, if the Will of God be so, to *resist even unto Blood*; when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us, but God and Holiness, then have we reached the *Height of Zeal*. In a word, Zeal is nothing else but the *Love of God made perfect* in us. And if we would see it drawn to the Life, we must contemplate it in the Blessed Jesus, who is the perfect Pattern of heroick Love. How boundless was his Love when the whole World, and how transcendent when a World of Enemies was the Object of it? How indefatigable was his Zeal? how wakeful, how meek, how humble, how firm and resolv'd? His Labours and Travels, Self-denial, Prayers and Tears; his Silence and Patience, his Agony and Blood poured out for his Persecutors, instruct us fully what divine Love, what divine Zeal is. And now even at this time Love reigns in him, as he reigns in Heaven; Love is still the predominant,

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the darling Passion of his Soul. Worthy art thou, O Jesus, to receive Honour, and Glory, and Dominion! Worthy art thou to sit down with thy Father on his Throne! Worthy art thou to judge the World, because thou hast loved, because thou hast been *zealous* unto Death; because thou hast overcome! Some there are indeed who have followed thy bright Example, though at a great Distance: As the *Martyrs* and *Confessors*: And those belov'd and admir'd Princes, who have govern'd their Kingdoms in Righteousness, to whom the Honour of God and the Good of the World have been far dearer than Pleasure, than Empire, than absolute Power, or that ominous Blaze, which is now called Glory. 'Tis the Work of Angels to marshal the Field of Glory in the end of all Things.

Oh, my Lord, may I at least be one to fill the Train of this triumphant Procession, in that blessed Day, when thou shalt crown the Zeal and Patience of thy Saints!

Having given a short Account of Zeal, we shall now endeavour to kindle it in every Breast, by some few Considerations, which will at once evince the Necessity, and declare the Truth of it.

Our own *Salvation* and *Happiness* depend upon it. For without this we reject, or at least,

least, frustrate the *Counsels of God against our own Souls*. 'Twas for this Christ died, that *he might purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*. This is the great End of our Election, *God hath chosen us in Christ, before the Foundation of the World, that we shou'd be Holy, and without Blame before him in Love*. Which is to be explain'd by that Passage, where God is said to have before ordain'd, *that we shou'd walk in good Works*. And the beginning of the Texts minds us, that 'tis for this End God imparts the Light of his Word, and the Vigour of his Spirit; that for this End he sanctifies and renews our Nature. *We are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works*. This is that which all the great and precious Promises of God immediately aim at. Our Lord in his Narrative of the last Judgment, and elsewhere, and his Apostles almost in innumerable Places, have with great Power, and great Earnestness inculcated this Doctrine, that we shall be judged according to our Works: That Immortality and Glory is the Portion not of Wisdom, but Patience and Charity; not of an Orthodox Faith, and specious Pretensions, but of Righteousness and Zeal. For the *incorruptible, the never-fading Crown*, is a Crown of Righteousness: Or if Men will be judg'd by their Belief, which

is not the Language of the Gospel, this does not alter the Matter at all, since *Faith* it self will be judg'd by its *Works*. And as a happy Eternity depends upon our *Zeal*; so nothing else can give us any comfortable, any rational Assurance of it in this Life. The Reason is plain, because 'tis *Zeal* which is the only unquestionable Proof of our Integrity; and good *Works* are the Fruit which alone can evidence the Life and Truth of our *Faith* and Love; hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments. Yea, a Man may say, thou hast *Faith*, and I have *Works*; shew me thy *Faith* without thy *Works*, and I will shew thee my *Faith* by my *Works*: Dost thou believe in God? why art thou not Holy as he is Holy? Dost thou believe in Jesus? why dost thou not deny thy self, take up thy Cross and follow him? why dost thou not walk as he walk'd? Dost thou believe a Judgment to come? why dost thou not work out thy Salvation with Fear and Trembling? why dost thou not prepare to meet thy God? why art thou not rich in good *Works*, that thou may'st lay up a good Foundation against the Time to come, and lay hold on Eternal Life? Nor are good *Works* less necessary to prove our Love than *Faith*. Certainly, if we love Holiness, if we Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, we shall never live in a direct

direct Contradiction to the strongest Passions of our Soul. We shall never refuse to gratifie an Inclination which is not only fervent in us, but its Gratification will procure us eternal Rewards too. If we love God, we cannot but seek his Glory, we cannot but desire to maintain Communion with him. And if so, do we know any Sacrifice that is more acceptable to God than *Good Works*? Do we know any that he delights in more than *Zeal*? Do we love the Blessed Jesus? Are not good Works the very Test of this Love which himself has appointed? *If a Man love me, he will keep my Commandments. Ye are my Friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. The Love of Christ, says the Apostie, constrains us what to do; to live not to our selves, but to him that died for us, and rose again. What other Returns can we make to Jesus? He sits on the Right Hand of God. All Power is given him in Heaven and in Earth. He does himself not need our Ministry, nor want our Service and Charity; but hear what he says; In as much as you did it to one of these my little ones, you have done it to me.*

Our Zeal is indispensably necessary to the Welfare and Happiness of others. Do we regard our Neighbour's eternal Interest? 'Tis Zeal represses Sin and propagates Righteousness; 'tis Zeal defends the Faith, and

suppresses

suppresses *Heretic* and *Error*; 'tis *Zeal* converts the Unbeliever, and builds up the Believer; 'tis *Zeal* that awakens the Drowsie, quickens the Lukewarm, strengthens the Weak, and enflames the Good with a holy Emulation; 'tis *Zeal* that baffles all Objections, refutes all Calumnies, and vanquishes all Oppositions raised against Religion, and oppresses its Enemies with Shame and Confusion; 'tis, in a word, *Zeal*, and *Zeal* alone that can make Religion appear lovely and delightful, and reconcile the World to it; for this alone can adorn the Gospel. It renders Virtue more conspicuous, more taking in Life and Example, than it can be in the Precepts and Descriptions of Words: nor is *Zeal* less serviceable to the *Temporal* than *Eternal* Interest of Mankind. When God laid the Foundation of the World, he laid the Foundation of Virtue too; and when he form'd Man, he wove the Necessity of *Good Works* into his very Nature. How necessary is Justice to poor Creatures who lie so open to Wrongs and Injuries? How indispensable is Charity or Generosity to those who are expos'd to so many Accidents, to so many Wants, to such a Vicissitude of Fortune? And being all subject to so many Follies and Infirmities, to so many Mistakes and Fancies; how strong must

must be our Obligation to mutual *Forbearance*, *Patience*, and *Gentleness*? In a word, Sin and Misery abounds in the World; and if there were not Virtues and *good Works* to balance the one, and to relieve and support us under the other, Life would be intolerable. Thus Reveal'd and Natural Religion do necessarily terminate and center in a *Zeal* for *Good Works* as their Ultimate End, and utmost *Perfection* in this Life; and that *Rule* of our Saviour, *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so unto them*, is an Abstract not only of the Law and the Prophets, but of the Book of *Nature* too; and this single Principle, if sincerely pursued, will ferment and work us up to the Noblest Heights of *Zeal*. I might here, if it were necessary, easily shew that *Zeal* has as happy an Influence on the *Publick* as the *Private*; that this must animate that Justice and Mercy which supports the *Throne*; that it is the Soul of that Honour, Integrity, Generosity, and Religion, which support the States and Kingdoms of the World, and without which all Politick Systems must needs tend to a Dissolution. But by what had been said already, this is most evidently made appear. The next thing to be consider'd is:

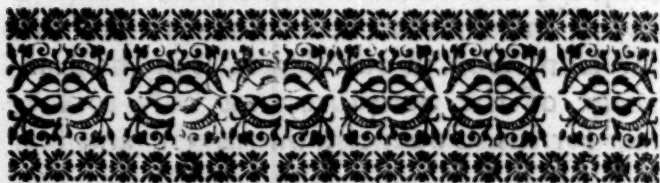
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That Zeal ministers most effectually to the Glory of God. For if Zeal be in it self thus lovely, thus necessary; if the Fruits and Effects of it be thus serviceable to the Temporal and Eternal Interest of Man, what a Lovely, what an Agreeable Notion of God shall we form from this one Consideration of him, that he is the great Author of it? That he is the Origin and Fountain of that Light and Heat, of that Strength and Power, of which 'tis compounded and constituted? He commands and exacts it; he exacts and encourages to it by the Promise of an Eternal Crown, and the ravishing Fruition of Himself: He has planted the Seeds of it in our Nature; and he cherishes them by the blessed and vigorous Influences of his Word and Spirit. How gracious is the Divine Nature! How gracious is the Divine Government! when the Substance of his Laws is, that we should love as Brethren; that we should cloath the Naked; feed the Hungry; deliver the Captive; instruct the Foolish; comfort the Afflicted; forgive one another, if need be, Seven Times a Day, and such like. If to do all this be an Argument of being regenerate and born of God, if this be a Proof of his Spirit ruling in us, his Nature communicated to us, and his Image stamp'd upon us;

us; How amiable must God be, when we discern so much Benefit and so much Pleasure, so much Beauty and so much Loveliness in those Qualities which are but faint and imperfect Resemblances of him! In a word, the Holiness of his Children and Servants, is a Demonstration of the Holiness of God himself, and in this consists the very Lustre of divine Glory. Holiness is the Flower of all his Attributes; the most Perfect, because the most comprehensive of all his divine Perfections; for Holiness includes Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. As to Goodness, the Case is so plain, that Holiness and Goodness are commonly used as Terms equivalent. As to Wisdom, 'tis evident that no Action is commendable and lovely, whatever it be, unless the Principle, the Motive of it be Wise and Rational; therefore Wisdom cannot be separated from the Notion of Holiness. Power must needs be comprised in it too; for Beneficence, which is at least one great Branch of Holiness, must unavoidably imply Power in the Benefactor, and Impotence and Want in the Beneficiary. This is the Notion wherein Holiness, when ascrib'd to God in Scripture, is generally taken. *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and Earth are full of thy Glory,* expresses the Greatness and Majesty,

Majesty, as well as the Rectitude and Purity of the Divine Nature; and to sanctifie the Lord God in our Hearts, is in the Language of the Scripture, not only to love him for his Goodness, but revere and fear him for his Majesty and Greatness. The Excellencies of the *Creatures*, their Fitness and Subserviency to the great Ends of their *Creation*, is the Glory of the *Creator*; just as the Beauty, Strength and Convenience of the Work is the Honour of the Architect. If the Sun, Moon, and Stars, the Irrational and Inanimate Parts of the Creation, shew forth the Glory of God, How much more do Spiritual and Rational Beings? Virtue is the *Perfection of Reason*, and *Zeal of Virtue*. For this is that which directly and immediately advances those great Ends that are dearest to God, as has been abundantly made out.





PERFECTION.



OME seem to have entertain'd such a Notion of Religion, as if *Moderation* here were as necessary as any where else. They look upon *Zeal* as an *Excess* of *Righteousness*, and can be well enough content to want Degrees of Glory, if they can but save their Soul. To which End they can see no Necessity of *Perfection*. Now I wou'd beseech such seriously to lay to Heart, that *Salvation* and *Damnation* are Things of no common Importance, and therefore it highly concerns them not to be mistaken in the Notion they form to themselves of *Religion*. For the Nature of Things will not be alter'd by their Fancies, nor will God be mock'd or impos'd on. If we deal sincerely with our selves, as in this Case it certainly behoves us to do, we must frame our Idea of Religion, not from the Opinions, the Manners, or Fashions of the World, but

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from the Scriptures. And we must not interpret these by our own Inclinations, but we must judge of the Duties they prescribe by those Descriptions of them, by those Properties and Effects which we find there. We must weigh the Design and End of Religion, which is to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Man, and to raise us above the World and the Body. We must then see how our Platform, or Model of Religion, suits with it; and if, after we have done this, we are not fully satisfy'd in the true Bounds and Limits which part Vice and Virtue, it cannot but be safest for us to err on the Right Hand. We ought always to remember too, that the repeated Exhortations in Scripture to Diligence, and that the most Earnest and Indefatigable ones, to Vigilance, to Fear and Trembling, to Patience, to Stedfastness, and such like, are utterly inconsistent with an Easie, Lazy, Gentle Religion. That the *Life* of Jesus is the fairest and fullest Comment on his *Doctrine*; and that we never are to follow the Example of a corrupt World, but of the best Men and the best Ages. This one Thing alone will convince us, what Endeavours, what Virtues are necessary to gain an incorruptible Crown. See with what Courage, nay Joy too, they *took up their Cross and followed him!* How generous were their

their Alms! The Riches of their *Liberality* were conspicuous in the very *Depth* of their *Poverty*. What Plainness and Singleness of Heart? what Grace and Warmth? what Peace and Joy show'd it self in their Conversation! What Modesty, what Humility in their Garb, Deportment, and the whole Train of Life! How frequent, how fervent, and how long too were their Prayers and Retirements? In fine, the Spirit and Genius of a Disciple of Christ discover'd it self in all they said and did; and the Virtues of their Lives did as evidently distinguish a *Christian* from a *Jew* or *Pagan*, as their *Faith*. How lovely was Religion then? how full its Joy; how strong its Confidence? Then did Christians truly overcome the World. Then did they live above the Body. Then was the Cross of Christ more delightful, than the Ease or Honour, the Pride or Pleasure of a sinful Life. Then did they truly, thro' the Spirit, wait for the Hope of Righteousness by *Faith*. Let us now compare our Lives with theirs, and then sit down content with poor and beggarly Attainments, if we can. Let us put our Virtues in the Scale against theirs; and if we have any Modesty, the Inequality will put us out of Countenance; we shall blush at our Vanity, and shall not have the Confidence to expect the same Crown,

Crown, the same Kingdom, with them. But as too lax a Notion of Religion is apt to beget too much Indifference and Unconcernedness, so will it be said too exalted an One is apt to beget Despair, which is a no less Obstacle of *Perfection*.

Many there are, who forming their Judgment upon the Slips and Defects of good Men, and the Corruption of human Nature, conceive *Perfection* to be a meer imaginary Notion. They believe indeed, that considering how apt Man is to fall short of his Duty, 'tis very fit that the Rule prescrib'd him should be exact, and that he should be frequently press'd and exhorted to *Perfection*: But that the thing it self is too difficult for mortal Man to attain in this Life. To this Objection I must oppose these few Things, which I believe will be sufficient to remove it.

The *beginning of Virtue* is the most difficult Part of it. The nearer we approach to *Perfection*, the easier as well as pleasanter is Religion: And therefore, whoever startles at the Difficulties which lye in the Way to an exalted Virtue, has as much Reason to be startled at those which will encounter him upon his first Entrance into Religion, and yet these must be conquer'd.

The avoiding the Difficulties of Religion does but plunge us into worse: We are
necessa-

necessarily under this *Dilemma*: If we will attain the Peace and Tranquillity of the *Mind*, we must mortifie and reduce the Appetites of the *Body*. If on the other Hand, we propose to gratifie the Appetites of the *Body*, and enjoy the Pleasure of *Sin*, we cannot do so without offering violence to the *Mind*. And if such be the War and Opposition between the *Soul* and the *Body*, that there is no way to a true and well-settled Peace and Pleasure, but by the Reduction and Mortification of the one or the other, then it will be easie to resolve what we are to do. For those Appeals which *Atheists* themselves make to *Reason*, proclaim the Soul of Man to be the Ruling and Noblest Part of him; besides, the Soul is the more vital, the more tender and sensible Part of us; and consequently, the Affliction of this must render us far more miserable than any Hardships or Difficulties Virtue can impose upon the *Body*. Whatever be the Difficulties of Virtue, they will soon vanish, if we often call to Mind, that Peace and Joy are the Fruit of Virtue, but Shame and Remorse that of Sin; that no Man ever yet repented of resisting and conquering his Lusts, but no Man ever yet did not repent of following them, unless he dy'd as much a Brute as he liv'd. That Heaven is a cheap Purchase whatever it costs us, but the Pleasure

sure of Sin a very dear one, how easily soever we come by it; and that we are not our own Masters; there is a God to whom we stand accountable for our Actions: And consequently whether we will, or will not, we must either undergo the Hardship and Discipline of Virtue, or the eternal Plagues and Punishments of Sin.

The Truth is, this Opinion of the Impossibility of *Perfection*, has both been begot and cherish'd by those wild Schemes of it, which have been drawn by the Hands of a flaming, indeed, but an indiscreet Zeal. But we have here recommended to the World no fantastick or enthusiastick *Perfection*. We have advanced no Heights of Virtue, but what many do, we hope, at this Day actually feel and experiment in themselves: None we are sure but what the Followers of the Blessed Jesus actually attain'd and practis'd. *Be ye followers of us*, says the Apostle, *as we are of Christ*. Their Lives were as bright a Rule as their Doctrine, and by their own Actions they demonstrated the Power of the Faith they taught. They did not, like the *Scribes and Pharisees*, bind heavy Burdens upon others, and not move them with their Finger. They did not like *Plato and Aristotle* magnifie Temperance and Modesty, at the Tabernacles and Carnivals of Princes; nor commend the Pleasure of
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Wisdom, in the Garden of *Epicurus*. But they liv'd as they taught, unspotted by the Pleasures, unbroken by the Troubles of the World; modest, serene, equal, and heavenly-minded; in Honour or Dishonour, in Want or Abundance, Liberty or Prison, Life or Death. Let us then no longer object or dispute, but with Faith and Patience be Followers of those who have inherited the Promises.

Being encompass'd with a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us: and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame; and is sat down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God. For consider him that endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, least ye be wearied and faint in your Mind.

We come now to speak of those, who will look upon this setting up the Doctrine of *Perfection*, as a Design against the Pleasures of Mankind. What, says such a one, shall I let go my present *Pleasures* out of my Hands, to hunt after I know not what, and I know not where? Shall I quit Pleasures that are every where obvious, for such as have no Being, it may be, but in Speculation?

tion? Or at least are never to be enjoy'd by any, but some few rare and happy Creatures, the Favourites of God and Nature? Pleasures that have Matter and Substance in them, for such as I can no more grasp and relish, than I can Dreams and Visions? But to this we answer, All this pretty Talk is stupid Ignorance and gross Mistake. For as to innocent and virtuous Pleasure, no Man needs part with it. I endeavour not to deprive Man of this, but to refine and purify it. And he who prefers either silly or vicious Pleasure before Religion, is wretchedly mistaken. *Perfect Religion* is full of Pleasure, had we but once arriv'd at true Purity of Heart. What can be so full of Pleasure as the Business of Religion? What can be more delightful than blessing than praising God, to a grateful Soul? *Hallelujah's* to a Soul snatcht from the brink of Destruction, into the Bosom of its Master? What can be more transporting than the melting Tenderness of a holy Contrition, made up, like *Mary Magdalen's*, of Tears and Hopes, Sorrow and Love, Humility and Glory, Confusion and Confidence, Shame and Joy? What can be more transporting than Love, the Love of a Christian, when he is all Love, as God is Love; when he *desires nothing in Heaven, nor on Earth, but God; when all Things are Dung and Dross to him in Com-*

VOL. III. U *parison*

parison of Jesus? If the Pleasures of the World be more transporting than those of Religion, 'tis because our Faith is weak, our Love imperfect, and our Life unsteady. A constant exalted Pleasure is, I grant it, the Fruit of Perfection alone. The Peace and Joy of the Holy Ghost reigns no where but where that *Zeal* and *Love*, which is an effect of the Fulness of the Spirit, reigns too.

That the Pleasures of the World are more numerous or obvious than those of Religion, is altogether a false and groundless Fancy. In every Place, and in every State, do the Pleasures of Virtue wait upon the *perfect Man*. They depend not, like those of the Body, on a thousand Things that are not in our Power, but only on God and our own Integrity. These Obstacles of *Perfection* being thus remov'd, and the Mind of Man being fully convinc'd of the Happiness that results from a State of Perfection, and of his Obligation to surmount the Difficulties which obstruct his Way to it, there seems to be nothing now left to disappoint the Success of this Discourse, but somewhat too much Fondness for the *World*, or somewhat too much Indulgence to the Body.

There is a Love of the World, which though it be not either for the Matter or
Degree

Degree of it, criminal enough to destroy our Sincerity and our Hopes of Salvation, yet it is strong enough to abate our Vigor, hinder our *Perfection*, and bereaves us of many Degrees of Pleasure at present, and Glory hereafter. The Indications of this kind of Love of the World, are too much Concern for the Pomp and Shew of Life, too much Exactness in the Modes and Customs of it, too quick a Sense of Honour and Reputation, Preeminence and Praise; too much haste, and too much Industry to grow rich, to *add House to House, Land to Land, and to clothe our selves with thick and heavy Clay*; too brisk a Relish of the Pleasures of the World, too great a Gaiety of Mind upon the Successes, too much Dejection upon the Disasters and Disappointments of it; too much Care, and too much Diligence, an encumbring and embroiling Ones self too far in worldly Affairs; too much Diversion, too much Ease. These, I say, are the Symptoms of a Mind tainted with a Love of the World, tho' not so far as to Sickness and Death. However, it will be enough to check the Vigor and vitiate the Relish of the Mind. Now the only way to overcome this Defect, and to captivate the Mind entirely to the Love and Service of Religion and Virtue, is to consider frequently and seriously the Rewards of

Perfection, the Pleasure that will attend it in another Life. Had the young Man in the Gospel done this, had he had as lively a Notion, and as true an Estimate, of the Riches of Eternity, as he had of Temporal Ones, he would never *have gone away sorrowful*, when he was advised to have exchanged the Treasures of *Earth* for those of *Heaven*. Had the Soul of *Martha* been as much taken up with the Thoughts of Eternity as that of *Mary*, she would have made the same Choice as she did. They who often think, how soon the Fashion, the Pomp and Grandeur of this World pass away, and how much better their *Heavenly* Country is than their *Earthly*; how much more lasting, and how much more glorious the new *Jerusalem*, *that City that has Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*, than this City of ours, which may be overthrown in a Moment; will neither weep nor rejoice with too much Passion; neither buy nor possess with too much Application of Mind. To conclude; He who so often and devoutly thinks of that Day, wherein *Christ who is our Life shall appear, and we also shall appear with him in Glory*, that he comes to love and long for it; such a one shall have no great Taste of the Honours of this World, of the Pleasures or Interests of this Life; nor will he be slothful or remiss, but *servent*

in Spirit, serving the Lord; whatever degrees of Affection he had for any Thing of that Nature, they will all vanish; he will have no Emulation but for *good Works*; no Ambition but for the *Glory* which is *Eternal*. In the pursuit of this will he lay out the Strength and Vigour of his Mind; for this he will retrench his Profit; for this he will deny his Pleasure; for this he will be content to be Obscure, Mean, and Laborious; for if the World be once crucify'd to him, he will the more easily bear the being crucify'd to it.

After all, there is an Infirmary in the Flesh; against which if we do not guard our selves, if we do not struggle heartily, we shall miscarry: The *Spirit is willing*, said our Saviour, *but the Flesh is weak*. Without ample Care and much Watchfulness, the Vigour of our Minds will be relaxed; the Exaltation of our Spirits will flag and droop, and we shall soon lose the Relish there is in Religion. The most effectual Remedies against this Frailty and Fickleness of our Nature, are *Godly Fear*, and *Stedfastness of Hope*.

The Purity and Presence of God; the Strictness and Impartiality of a Judgment to come; the Loss of an Eternal Crown; the Terrors of Eternal Punishment; the Number and Strength of Temptations; the

deplorable Falls of the greatest Saints, and the Conscience of our own Weakness, will not fail to work in us this *godly Fear*. Let us then not only *begin*, but also *perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*; *Blessed is he that feareth always*.

The *Stedfastness of Hope*, of Hope that waits and longs for the Coming of our Lord, will invite us often to take a View of *Canaan*; will often fill the Mind with the Beauties and the Glories of Eternity; the Rest and Transports of another World; the Love of God, and of Jesus; incorruptible Crowns; the *Hallelujahs* of Angels; the Shouts of Victory; the Fruit of the Tree of Life; the Streams that water the Paradise of God; and every such Object will chide us out of our Weakness and Cowardise; every such Thought will upbraid us out of our Laziness and Negligence; we shall hear always sounding in our Ears the Words of Jesus to his Disciples, *What, can ye not watch with me one Hour*; and yet do you expect to reign with me for ever? Or those to the Church of *Laodicea*; *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me upon my Throne, as I have overcome, and am sat down with my Father on his Throne*.

The Reader will all along perceive, that when we are speaking of *Perfection*, we mean it only in that Sense which Human Nature

is capable of. We do not understand the *Perfection* of Angels and the Blessed Saints in Heaven, who with their Dust, shook off all the Frailties and Infirmities which are inseparable from Man in this Life; But Infirmities and Frailties that may be cur'd, or that Men do not cherish, and are fond of, if they do labour Earnestly to get rid of them by Watchfulness and Prayer, will not hinder their reaching that Degree of Perfection which will be acceptable to God, and give upon *Earth* a Taste of Heaven. Such a Soul will be alone arm'd against Temptation; and as the Paths of this Life are slippery, if he trips ever so little, will soon recover himself; and even if he falls, shall never receive a Wound that is Mortal; Contrition and Grace will supply him with a Healing Balm, which through the Merits of our Saviour will soon set him right again, so as to go on courageously and successfully in the Way wherein he ought to walk.

Whenever the Reader is in the Vigour of the Spirit, in the Ardors of Faith, of Love, when he is inflam'd with a Holy Desire to arrive at that State of Perfection, which is so pleasing in the Sight of God; let him Address the Throne of Grace with these or the like Petitions; and what he asks in Faith, will surely be granted him.

O, my God, and my Father, increase the Knowledge of thy Word, and the Grace of thy Spirit in me; Enable me to perfect Holiness in thy Fear, and to hold fast the Stedfastness of my Hope unto the End. Pardon all the Sins and Errors of my Life, and accept of my Services, through Jesus Christ. And because, though after all we can do we are Unprofitable Servants, thy Infinite Bounty will yet certainly Recompence our Sincere Endeavours to promote thy Glory; Let me find my Reward from Thee, or rather do thou thy self vouchsafe to be my Reward. I shou'd have ever thought my self unworthy to have put up this Petition to Thee, O thou Glorious and Incomprehensible Majesty, had not thy own Goodness, thy own Spirit kindled this Ambition in me. Behold what manner of Love is this, that we shou'd be called the Sons of God! These are the Words of thy Servant St. John. And now therefore, my Soul can never be at Rest till I awake at the Last Day after thy Likeness. I can never be satisfied till I behold thy Glory: Which vouchsafe me, I beseech thee, by thy Mercy and thy Faithfulness, by the Sufferings and Intercession of thy Dearly Beloved Son. Amen.

S C R U.

SCRUPLES.



IN Matters of Religion and another World, nothing is more ordinarily observable, than that those People are wont to have the greatest *Fears*, who have the least Reason for them. Tho' Good Christians think the best of others, they are generally very suspicious of themselves; They have a deep Sense of the Danger of Sin, and a full Conviction of the fatal End of *Disobedience*; which makes them think, that in a matter wherein it concerns them so highly not to be mistaken, they can never be over-jealous of their own Hearts, or too cautious, lest after all, the Insupportable Punishments of Sin shou'd fall to be their own Portion.

This they do in an especial Manner, if in any Material Point, upon which, as to the Sentence of Life or Death, the Gospel lays a great Stress, they are Ignorant and

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Erroneous: For there are no *Terrors* in the World comparable to those of *Religion*; nor have any Men upon Earth so much Reason to be afraid, as they who are in Danger to fall under them. If there is any thing therefore which will be of great Account in the last Judgment, or what is all one, which they think will be severely accounted for; and they either find themselves to be guilty of it, or but fancy that they are (which is the same Thing in the Effect of it,) they must needs be fearfully perplex'd, and depriv'd of all Peace and Comfort, tho' they are really in the greatest Safety. 'Tis true indeed, that in the End they shall be no Losers; nor shall those mistaken Fears ever be fulfill'd upon them: Because at the last Day God will judge them according to his own Rule, which they have really perform'd, tho' they knew it not, and not according to their *Errors* and Misapprehensions of it. Their *Errors* shall in no wise pervert his *Truth*; for he sees what they are, however they may mistake it; and if he sees them to be *Righteous*, his Sentence will follow his own Knowledge. He will declare their Righteousness to all the World.

This is the *Security* of all Good Men, as it is the *Eternal Terror* and *Astonishment* of all *Hypocrites* and *Sinners*, that they shall be brought before an Unerring, Uncorrupt Judge,

Judge, who can neither be brib'd nor deceiv'd, and who cannot mistake them, or wrongfully condemn them, however they may mistake, or wrongfully condemn themselves. Thus then they are really *safe* in their own Goodness, when they most of all suspect their own *Danger*, and are secure from Evil, even while they are *afraid* of falling under it.

But tho' every Good Man is in this Safety, let his Understanding of himself be what it will; yet if in any of those things which he takes to be a Matter of Life or Death, he judges wrong of himself, and thinks erroneously, he can enjoy no Peace and Comfort. He will go to Heaven full of *Fears* and foreboding Thoughts, and never think himself in the Way to Bliss, 'till he is actually enthron'd in it: He will at last be happy, but he will have no Sight or Expectation of it in the Way: For all his Life long he will be tormented with *Doubts* and *Suspensions*, *Fears* and *Jealousies*, and be still, by Turns, concluding himself lost as to the next World, tho' he be only lost in his own sickly Imagination. And this fancy'd future Misery will bring him under a Real one for the present. It will make him have sad Thoughts, and a sorrowful Heart. It will much abate his Joy, and disturb his Peace,

Peace, and almost overwhelm him in groundless Perplexity and Vexation.

But that Pious Souls may not *fear* where no *Fear* is, nor torment themselves with unreasonable Apprehensions, let us endeavour to remove their groundless *Scruples* and Mistakes, by shewing what, and of what Force those things are, which are wont, without any sufficient Reason, to disquiet the Minds, and to disturb the Peace of good and safe, but mistaken Christians, about it.

The Causes of Good Mens *Fears* are chiefly these.

They are wont to call in Question their Future Salvation; because after all their Care against them, they find that some *Motions* of the *Flesh*, some *Stirrings* of their *Lusts*, some *Thoughts* of Evil, do still arise in them. They feel themselves subject to Delights and Fancies, and Desires of Forbidden things: They are liable to a *Lustful Thought*, a *Covetous Wish*, an Insurrection of *Anger*, of *Envy*, and of several other Damning Sins.

'Tis true indeed, these *Lusts* do not reign in them, because they do not consent to their Instigations, nor do what they would have them. They can only inhabit and stir in them, but have not Strength enough to give Laws to them. For they repress them before they come to will and chuse, much less to fulfill and practise what they incline

to. They may perhaps have a *Thought* and *Fancy*, a *Wish* and *Inclination* after *unchaste Pleasures*; but they correct themselves there, and never in their *Hearts* consent to an *Unlawful Embrace*, nor ever proceed to an *Unclean Action*. In a sudden Motion of *Anger*, it may be they may have several Expressions of *Wrath*, and *Instances* of *Revenge* occur to their *Thoughts*, and obtruding themselves upon their *Imaginations*; but they stop there, and do not consent to utter an *Injurious Word*, or to commit a *Spiteful Action*; and the same they Experience by themselves in other *Instances*. In all which, several forbidden things will get into their *Thoughts* and *Desires*, and steal from them a *Wish* or *Inclination*: But when once they have done that, they can do no more, being unable either to gain their *Consent*, or to command their *Practice*; so as that they should not only desire, but also chuse and fulfill them.

Now tho' they do not suffer *Sin* to reign in them, so as to consent to it, or to fulfill its *Lusts*; yet they fear lest their very *Thoughts* and *Inclinations* after it should prove damnable. For God requires the *Obedience* of our whole *Man*, of the *Mind* and *Affections*, as well as of our *Wills* and *Actions*; and he is disobey'd by any, as well as by all our *Faculties*. And seeing every *Sin* is forbidden under
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Pain of Death, who knows but that this Admission of *it* into our *Thoughts* and *Desires*, is a Mortal Transgression? This is One great Cause of *Fear*, and a Rock of Offence to a truly Honest and Good Man.

But to take off all *Doubt* and *Scruple* upon this Account, we must know, that our *Impotent Lusts* and *Ineffective Desires* of Evil Things, if they are able to get no farther than a *Thought* or *Wish*, tho' at present they are a Matter of *Exercise* and *Humiliation*, yet at the Day of Judgment they shall be no Article of *Death* or *Condemnation*. For Christ's Gospel does not Sentence us severely upon these first *Motions* of a *Lust*, or *Beginnings* of a *Sin*. If they arrive no higher than *Fancy* or *Inclination*, thro' the Merits of Christ's Sacrifice, there is Grace enough in store for them; and in the Gospel-account they are not grown up to be a Matter of Death, nor come within the Confines of Destruction.

We shall not at the Last Day be condemn'd for our feeble *Lusts* and *Desires* after *Evil*, which are unconsented to, and unfulfilled: God will never Sentence any Man otherwise good, for every *sudden Desire* and *Inclination* after sinful Things. If it rests there, and goes no farther than bare Desire, he will pardon and pass it by.

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These *Lustings* and Desires are to be consider'd, both as to their *First Birth*, and as to their *indulg'd* and *allow'd Continuance*; the First is never *damning*, and the Latter many times is no Article of *Condemnation*.

As for our *Bodily Lusts* and Desires of *Evil* in their first Birth, no Man, who is otherwise *Virtuous* and *Obedient*, shall ever be judg'd to *die* for them: If it were otherwise, who could possibly be sav'd? For as long as we live in this World, we have all of us these first Motions of Appetite after *Evil* Things, more or less; and there is no avoiding of it: For the Laws of God, which are *Impositions* superinduc'd upon our Natures, by their *Prohibitions* make several of our most *natural Appetites* and *Desires* themselves to be sinful; the *Lusts* of the *Flesh* making up a good Part of the *Prohibitions* of the Gospel. But tho' God by his *After-Prohibition* has made them sinful, yet from that natural Necessity which he had laid upon us before, we cannot live entirely free from them. Our *Flesh* will *lust* and make Offers after such things as are naturally fitted to its Liking, and we cannot help it; because our Bodies, as long as they are conversant among the things of this World, from their natural Frame and Constitution will still be excited by some things to *crave* and *desire*, and provok'd by others to hate
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and abhor them. This is *Natural*; and while there is any Life and Sense in our *Bodies*, the Good and Evil Things of the World must of necessity thus sensibly affect them; and where they are affected with *Pleasure*, there 'tis natural for them to *desire*; as where they feel Pain, 'tis natural for them to abhor the thing which occasions and produces it.

Thus these *first Lustings* and *Cravings* after forbidden Things are *natural*, and were made *necessary* before the Prohibition came to make them *sinful*. And if by an After-Law Men shall be condemn'd for being sensibly affected with outward things, or for having a *sudden Lust* and Inclination after them upon their being so sensibly affected with them; they shall then be condemn'd for what they could not help, and die for not performing Impossibilities.

But God neither can nor does make any Laws which exact things so rigorous; he punishes nothing in us but what proceeded from our own Will, nor exacts an Account of us for our *Natural Lusts* and *Inclinations*, further than they are subject to our own Choice and free Disposal. If a *sudden Fear* or *unclean Desire* arise up in the Heart of a *Holy Man* from the Presence of *outward Objects* or *Inward Imaginations*, and the Natural Temper of his Blood and Spirits, he shall

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shall not be put to answer for it, because he could not prevent it. He could no more hinder it than he can hinder the beating of his Heart, or the Motion of his Blood; seeing it was no Free-will of his, but a Natural Effect of his Temper. And to be condemn'd for that, is to suffer for having *Flesh* and *Blood*, as well as *Reason* and *Spirit*, and to undergo Punishment for being made up of *Body* as well as *Soul*; for being a *Man*, and not an *Angel*.

As for several things which follow upon the *first Suggestion* of a *Prohibited Object*, and upon the *first Lusting* after it; they are not the Effects of *Nature*, but of our Choice. For tho' a first *Thought* and *Fancy* of Evil, and a *sudden Lusting* after it, may obtrude it self upon us before we can observe it, whether we will or not, either by *Chance*, or by Occasion of a *Temptation*; yet a *continu'd Entertainment* of it, and a Stay upon it in our *Imaginations*, to cherish *Lust* and enflame *Desire*, cannot come upon us but by our own *Liking* and *Connivance*. For as soon as ever we can observe them, our *Thoughts* are our own to dispose of, how, and upon what we please. Wherefore if we please, we may call them off from the *forbidden Objects*. They started it without our Leave, but they must have our Leave to stay upon it.

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However, these *After-Thoughts* themselves, and these *Inclinations* after *Forbidden Things*, which come thus from the free Determination, or at least from the Connivance of our own Wills, are not always an *Article* of our *Condemnation*; but then only when we consent to do what they suggest, or practise and fulfil the same. For if the *forbidden Thing* is only *fancy'd* in our Minds, and *craw'd* by our Appetites, but has got no Possession of our Hearts, nor any Endeavours of our Lives and Actions, according to the gracious Terms of that Gospel by which we must stand or fall, it is not yet come within the *Terrors* of Judgment, nor has made us liable to *Death* and *Hell*.

For the Evil and Danger of our *Bodily Desires*, is the Evil and Danger of a *Temptation*; when our *Appetites* desire what the *Prohibition* has made *Evil*, and our Spirits on the other side declare what the Commandment has made good, then is the time of Temptation or Tryal, whether our Wills are resolv'd to stick to our *Lusts*, or to our *Duty*; and whether they will prefer God or Sin; and herein lies the great Danger of our Natural Appetites; for tho' in themselves they are not *mortal* and *damning* to any Man otherwise Good, yet are they Traps and Snares to *mortal* and *damning* Sins.

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I have said our natural Appetites are not mortal and damning to any Men who are otherwise good and virtuous. The *Lusting* and *Inclinations* of our *Flesh* after *Meats* and *Drinks*, and after *Ease* and *Pleasure*, and the *Lusting* of the *Eye* after *Gain* and *Riches*, are not absolutely and directly *forbidden*, nor in themselves, and before they have got any farther, an Article of our *Condemnation*. All the *Desires* of the *Flesh* are naturally necessary; some to preserve our own Persons, and some to the *Preservation* and *Propagation* of *Mankind*. This God himself has made, and he allows of it. 'Tis a Sin in no Man to have a *Stomach* to his *Meat*, to have *Desires* after *Ease*, and a fleshly *Inclination* after *bodily Pleasures*; because God has so framed our *Bodies* that they should, and therefore he cannot be angry with us, if we do desire them.

Indeed he has not left these *Desires* to their own Swing, but has put several *Restraints* upon them. He has bound them up from some *Objects*, and in some *Degrees*. We are forbid to *desire* and *lust* after *Meat* and *Drink*, *Ease* and *Pleasure*, *Riches* and *Plenty*, when either we are injurious to other Men, in procuring that which we lust after; or when we are excessive and intemperate in the Use of it; or for its sake transgress any other *Commandment*. Our
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Desires for *Meat* and *Drink*, for Instance, must not carry us on to excessive Measures in *Gluttony* and *Drunkenness*; our carnal Lusts must not draw us on to act them with undue Objects, in Fornication, Adultery, Rapes, or other prohibited *Uncleanness*: And our Desire of Money must not betray us into Thefts or Robberies, Fraud and Circumvention, Extortion and Oppression, Niggardliness, Uncharitableness, or other Sins, whether against Justice or Charity. As on the other side, our *Fears* and *Aversations* from Wants or Pains, or other bodily Evils, must not induce us to neglect a Commandment, that we may please our Flesh, or to deny our Religion for the securing of a bodily Enjoyment.

These Restraints God has laid upon our bodily *Appetites*; having given us these Commands, with several others, which we are often tempted to transgress, in order to the fulfilling of them. For our bodily *Appetites* themselves do not distinguish either of *Objects* or *Degrees*. A Man's Palate or his Stomach, when solicited by any delicious Meat or Drink, which yields a Pleasure to it, does not tell him when it hath enough, nor ceases to desire before it comes to *Intemperance*. Our Eyes *lust* after Money, but they consider not whose it is. If they may have it, they matter not to whom it belongs;

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or how they come by it. 'Tis the same in our *fleshy Appetites* of other Things, the natural Pleasure of which we lust after; and 'tis that which moves our Bodies, and these lust after them, so long as they are pleas'd with them. They never stop at a fit Measure, or turn away from a forbidden Object. Those who are rul'd by them, are carried on to any Thing that agrees with them, whether it be lawful or unlawful, and are thus sure to be ensnar'd into Sin. Here God has set a *Restraint* upon them, and will punish them severely if they go beyond it.

Then are our *Lusts* mortal to us, they are then Articles of our Condemnation, when they have damning Effects, and ensnare us into mortal and damning Sins. To any good Man, the bare Lusts and Desires of Evil are not so truly a *damning Sin*, as a dangerous Temptation. They are not in themselves an *Article of Death* to him, but they are apt to carry him on to that which is. For that which puts any Sin into a Capacity to tempt us, is our Lust or Desire of something which is annex't to it, and which we hope to obtain by it. There is always something that goes along with it, which is naturally fitted to please our Flesh, and to excite a carnal Appetite; and by this we are tempted and allured into the Practice

Etice and Commission of it. Bare Sin could never tempt any Man, nor could any one in his Wits ever chuse to disobey for Disobedience sake, without any Thing further; because there is no good in Transgression, nakedly consider'd, which could move any Man's Will to chuse and embrace it: But on the contrary much evil, that will dissuade and fright him from it: For it deprives us of God's Favour, and subjects us to his Vengeance, fills us with sad Hearts, and anxious and terrible Expectations. But that which wins us over to a liking and Approbation of it, is the Appearance of some *Pleasure, Profit, Honour*, or other annext Allurement, which we expect to reap by it. 'Tis one or other of these that overcomes all our *Fears*, and inveigles us into the Commission of it; for they strike in with our natural Appetites, and raise in us Desires after it; and these prove the Baits which draw us in, and are the ensnaring *Temptation*. All the Force of which lyes in this; the Satisfaction of a Lust is join'd with the acting of a Sin, which is an Invitation to us, for the sake of the one, to commit the other. The Transgression has something annext, which is agreeable to our fleshly Natures, and raises in us Desires of it, and Cravings after it. And when it has got this Hold of us, it draws us as much

as we can be drawn by our Love, or our own Lusts, and the Gratifications of our *bodily Appetites*; which is indeed a great Step to our Choice and Commission of it, and a strong Temptation.

For this is the natural Order of our Actions; either our *Consciences* or our Passions move and excite us to them, and then our Wills chuse and intend them, and upon that Choice and Intention our Understandings contrive and direct, and last of all our *bodily* and *executive* Powers fulfil and perform them. All our *bodily* Actions are at the Choice, and under the Command of our Wills; and all our Choice is upon the Appearance of some Good or other, which either our Consciences, or our fleshly Lusts and Appetites propose to us. Our Wills we must remember are placed in a middle State, and are beset on both Sides. Our Lusts being urgent with us to one thing, and our Consciences to another. And this is that Strife between the *Flesh* and the *Spirit* which is mentioned in the Scriptures, and that Contention which St. Paul describes between the Law of Lust in the Members, and the Law of God in the Mind. These two Principles, our Body and Spirit, or our Lusts and our Consciences, are those great Interests that vie and struggle in us, and emulously contend which shall obtain the
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Consent and Choice of the Will of Man. And whenever either of them has got that, our Actions follow in course. For our bodily Members move at our own Choice; and therefore if our Lusts after the Pleasure of Sin, have once prevail'd upon our Wills to consent to it, they have gain'd their Point; and we shall go on without more ado to act and commit it.

In this then lyes all the Force of a Temptation, that the Sin which we are tempted to, has something annexed to it, wherein our Flesh is delighted, and which it lusts after and desires for the sake of that Pleasure which it finds in it. And when by this Means any Sin has got our fleshly Love and Desire, it has got a powerful Friend in our own Bosoms. For our Lusts are strong and violent, and where they set upon a Thing, they will not easily be denied, but are urgent and importunate with our Wills to consent to the Gratification and fulfilling of them. If once any Sin has struck in with them, it is able to try its Strength, and contend with the Law of God in the Mind, being furnish'd now with a powerful Bait, and a strong Temptation.

Thus are our *Lusts* and *Desires* of forbidden *Things*, not the forbidden *Sin* it self, but the Temptation to it. In the bare *Lust-ing* or *Desiring* of them, we do not commit

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the damning Sins themselves, but are tempted only to the Commission. And in this the Apostle St. *James* is most express: For then, says he, *every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lusts, and enticed to evil by them.*

As for *meer Temptation* to a damning Sin, it is not mortal and damning. For our being tempted to Sin, is not a renouncing of our Lord, but an exercise of our Service and Obedience to him, and a Tryal whether or no we will renounce him. It is the great Proof and Argument how dearly we love him, and how closely and faithfully our Wills adhere to him. It shews how Obedience is uppermost in our Hearts, and that we will rather deny our dearest *Lusts* and importunate Desires, than venture for their Sakes to offend him. Thus to be tempted is so far from being Criminal, that it gives a plain Proof how much we will lose and suffer rather than we will disobey. It is a Tryal of us how far we will prefer God and our Duty before other Things, even those that are most dear to us of all Things in the World besides. We do not sin damnably then in being tempted, so long as we consent not to it, but manfully resist and overcome the Temptation.

And this is evident from hence, because these very Men who had liv'd most free from *Sin*, have not for all that liv'd free from *Temptation*. Even *Adam* himself, before he knew what *Sin* was, and during his *State of Innocence*, was liable to be tempted. For the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, of which God had forbidden him to eat, was alluring to his Eyes, and an incentive to his Lust, as well as any other Tree of the Garden. And because it was so, the Woman was won to eat of it, thro' the Strength of such Desire after it, notwithstanding God had commanded her to abstain from it. *The Woman saw that the Tree was good for Food, and pleasant to the Eye; and she took of the Fruit thereof and did eat.* And by the same Inducement she drew in her Husband, and gave it unto him, and he did eat also. The Second *Adam* who was most entirely innocent, and guilty of no sort of Sin, was yet liable to Temptation, like as we are, *being in all Points* tempted like as we are, yet without Sin: Nay, the Apostle says it was necessary he should be tempted, that by what he felt in himself, he might the better know how to shew Mercy and have Compassion upon us. *In all Things*, says he, *it behov'd him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful as well as a faithful High-Priest; for in that he*

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himself hath suffer'd being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

As for our being tempted then, or invited to any Sin by our bare *Lust* and Inclination after it, in it self, and before it has got any further, it is no mortal Sin or damning Transgression. It is the Scene of good Endeavour, the Trial of Obedience, a Test of our great Love and Preference of God and his Law, before all the World besides, before even our own dearest *Lusts*, and our own selves : And therefore in it self, bare *Lust* and Desire, or being tempted and invited to Sin, cannot be damnably *sinful*.

As for our *Lusts* and *Temptations*, 'tis true they differ in Degrees, according as our Desires of that Evil which we are tempted to, are indulg'd, and have advanced more or less. For sometimes a Lust may stir, but as soon as it is observ'd, it is again extinguish'd. The Pleasure of the Sin whether by being seen or fancy'd, raises in us a sudden *Thought* or *Desire* after it; but the *Lust* is expell'd, and the Fancy is turned away from the evil Thing as soon as it is discovered. 'Tis not suffer'd to remain and dwell in us, but is presently thrown out with Indignation. And this is a Power over our own Desires, and a way of breaking the Strength of Temptations; which is incident only to *graver*

Men, and to *perfect Christians*; and that not in all Instances of Temptation, but only in such as are not extraordinary in themselves, and which have been often vanquish'd and triumph'd over. It is in such Cases, where Use has made the Conquest easie, and long Custom of ceasing and turning away from the inveigling *Desire*, has so taken off all the Difficulty, that we are able to silence and subdue the Lust as soon as we discern it. And as for those feeble Desires and impotent Temptations, there is no Question but a good Christian may be under them, and yet he is in no Danger of being condemned for them.

At other Times our *Lusts* live longer and advance higher. They grow up to high Degrees, till they are able to contend and strive against the Mind and Conscience; inso-much that when at last they are deny'd, and our Wills chuse to do what God commands us in spite of them, the Conquest is not gain'd without much Struggling and Opposition. The *Flesh* lusteth against the *Spirit*, as well as the *Spirit* lusteth against the *Flesh*. And tho' at last the *fleshly Lusts* are overpower'd, and cannot prevail with our Wills to chuse on their Side, yet do they strive hard, and contend for it. Here a *Lust* is not presently subdu'd as soon as it is discern'd, but it strives and struggles. It

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can make Head against the Law in the Mind, tho' it cannot overcome it. It has some Interest in the Will, tho' it has not a sufficient Interest: For the Will hearkens to it for some time, and considers of what it offers; notwithstanding that at last it rejects its Suit, and thro' the Sollicitations of a more powerful Favourite, resolves against it. This Power our Lusts have in us while we are *young Converts*, and of a more *imperfect Goodness*. In some very great Temptations, such as are the *Fear of Death*, and bodily Torments especially, they will struggle thus in those, who are the most *perfect Christians* of all.

But now when our *Lusts* are in this *degree*, when they stay upon our Souls for some Time, and strive against our Spirits for the Consent of our Wills, before they are finally deny'd it; yet if they go no farther than bare *Lust*, and our Wills do not, after all their Struggling, consent to them, or chuse the *Evil Thing* that is *craw'd* by them, they are still uncondemning, and incident to an *Heir of Salvation*. This, as I take it, is clear from what St. Paul himself says of the truly *Regenerate*, or of those who in his Words *walk in the Spirit*. For in them he says plainly, that the *Flesh lusteth against the Spirit*, tho' it is not able to prevail over it. The *Flesh lusteth*

against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh.

Thus even in fulfilling the Will of the Spirit, you contradict another Will of your Lusts, and cannot do, or do not the Things that you would.

Christ himself, who knew no Sin, nor ever committed any Thing which could in strict Justice be worthy of Death, was yet subject to such a Conflict of *Flesh* and *Spirit* as this now mention'd. His very *Death* and *Passion*, which were the Consummation and *highest Part of his Obedience*, were not without great struggling of his *Flesh*, and a long and earnest Conflict of his *bodily Desires* against it. He was in a strange Fear and Discomposure about it. He began, says St. Mark, *to be sore amaz'd*. And when he had recover'd himself a little from the *Maze* of that sudden Fright, he prays against it, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me*. His Request not being granted at first, he makes a fresh Address, wherein he is more Importunate; *being in an Agony*, says St. Luke, *he pray'd more earnestly*; his *Supplications he offer'd up with strong crying and Tears*. All this Strife and Opposition, and the Desire of Life, and the bodily Appetite after Ease and Safety, together with the Sense of God's Wrath and high Displeasure, rose in him against his Obedience to his Sufferings.

ings. But because all this was only Carnal Desire, which tho' it lasted some Time, and discompos'd him much, was not able to gain any Thing of his Will and Consent to the Refusal of his Duty; therefore notwithstanding That, he was perfectly Innocent. All that can be said, is, he was tempted of his *Flesh* against this great and last Instance of his Obedience, but he did not yield or consent to the Temptation.

Thus then as for the *Lust* and *Desires* of our *Flesh*, whether they be suddenly reject-ed, and make no Resistance, or are longer liv'd, and contend much; yet if they have got no Consent of our Wills to the fulfilling of them, nor any Choice or Performance of the Evil Thing or Action which is crav'd by them, (as those have not which are the Complaint and Fear of Good Men) they are only a Temptation to a Damning Sin; but in themselves thus far they are not Damning.

Having shewn for what Lusts and Desires of Evil we shall at the Last Day be *pardon'd*, we shall now shew for which of them we shall be *condemn'd*.

Our *Lusts* are then Damnable, and dangerously Evil, when they are effectual Instruments and Temptations to Damning Evils, and carry us on either to chuse or practise them; for they are the great Fa-

vourites and Seducers of our Wills, and thereby the Authors of our Actions. They first bring us to chuse and consent to the deadly Sin by which they are gratify'd, and then to act it; and when they are gone on to either of these, they are an *Article of Condemnation*. They are uncondemning till they come so far, but if once they have got us to consent to the alluring Sin, from that Consent begins their String, and both it, and all that follow'd it, makes us liable to Eternal Destruction.

To clear this Matter a little farther, I will here set down those several Steps by which we ascend to the Completion, and are carry'd on to the Working and Commission of any Sin.

At the Representation of the *Object* which is to tempt us to it, whether it be an *Unchast Embrace*, an *Unlawful Gain*, or the like, either by what we *feel* of it now, if it be before our *Senses*, or by what we *fancy* of it, if in our Imagination, our *Flesh* is pleas'd and delighted with it. And from this Pleasure it naturally goes on to *Love*, and *Love* ends in *Desire*; but when once we are come to *Desire* a Thing, our *Passions* have done their Part, and all that in them lies towards the *Action*.

When in the *Appetite* or *Animal Soul* the Sin has gone thus far, the next Step is, that

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to gratify this Desire, or *Lust* of our *Flesh*, our *Wills* shou'd consent to it. For our *Wills* are the Disposers of all that follows; and unless they consent to get that which the *Flesh* so much *desires*, there can be nothing more done towards it. But if they do consent to the *Desire*, and intend to fulfill it, then our *Understanding* and Contrivance are employ'd in Deliberating and Consulting, what Time, what Place, what Means are fittest to accomplish it with the least Difficulty, and the most Delight, and to the greatest Advantage. And when our Minds have seen which to prefer and fix upon, then our *Wills* resolve upon them, and make choice of them. When this is done, the last *Decree* is past, and all the Time of Doubting and Deliberation is over; nothing then remains, but to apply our *Bodily Powers*, to perform our Resolutions in the Execution and Commission of that which was resolv'd upon.

This is the Natural Order of our Faculties, and the Process that is observ'd by our Principles of Action, toward their Completion, and the final Commission of any Sin. The first Beginning is in the Lower Soul, for that is the Inlet of all Sin, and the open Door for Temptation; and there it is that Sin has all its Strength and Ensnaring Powers; upon which Account

'tis call'd by St. Paul, a *Law in the Members*. And when these *Lusts* of our *Flesh* have won the Consent of our *Wills*, they are secure of all our After-Contrivances for it, and of all our actual Performance and Execution. For both our *Thoughts* and our *bodily Powers* are at the Command of our own *Wills*. If at the Instigation of our *Lusts*, our *Wills* have once consented to the *Sin*, they will quickly set our Heads at work to *contrive* for it, and our Hands and other bodily Powers to execute and fulfil it.

In this Method our Principles of Action move, when we act with *full Deliberation*; and when they are all employ'd, sometimes indeed there is no *Contrivance* at all, because none is needful; as it happens when the Opportunity of the *Sin* is present with us, and just before us at such a time as we consent to it. Nothing more is then wanting, but only to act and fulfil it. When the Opportunity is absent, and we are put to forecast and contrive for it, then is the Process of our Faculties in that Order which we have here describ'd.

For an Instance and Illustration of this, we will take the Sin of *Drunkenness*, and the Process will appear to be as has been mention'd. In a Man whose Inclination that way disposes him to be tempted by it, the *Fancy* of it in himself, or the having it suggested

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gested to him by another, gives him a Thought of the Pleasure which accompanies it; and from that Apprehension of its *Pleasurableness*, he begins to *love*, and from that *Love* he goes on straight-way to *desire* it. His Will being now solicited by his *Lust* or *bodily Desire*, consents to the fulfilling of it. And this *Consent* being once gain'd, the next Thing in order is to *deliberate* and *contrive* what *Company*, what *Time*, and what *Place* are fittest for it. And when by comparing all Things together, he comes to make a Judgment of that, he immediately chooses, and resolves upon it; and that being done, there is nothing remaining further but to execute what he has resolv'd, and go on to the Performance of it.

Now so long as the Evil is contain'd in a short delightful Thought, or Love, or Desire, and rests there, but goes no farther; it is not so much our *damning Sin*, as our *dangerous Temptation*. It will be conniv'd at, and at the Last Day we shall not be *condemn'd* for it. Thus far the Sin is only soliciting our *Choice*, but has not got it; and as yet we have not committed a mortal Crime, but are only under a Trial, whether we will be drawn to the Commission of it or no. If once our *Wills* consent to it, then begins the *Sting*, and there the Danger enters; for the *lusting* after Evil, so far as to
consent

consent to it, and much more so as to contrive for it, or to fulfil it, makes us liable to Death and eternal Damnation. If by means of the tempting *Lust* any Sin has prevail'd so far, it is become a mortal Offence, and subjects us to Destruction. *Lust*, says St. James, *when it is conceiv'd*, or is imperfectly consented to, answering its Conception, which is an imperfect Formation, *bringeth forth Sin*; and *Sin*, *when* (by being perfectly consented to) *it is finished*, *bringeth forth Death*, which is the Wages of it.

And that our *Lusts* after any *Sin* are then damnably *sinful*, when they are gone beyond Desire, and are come either to our Consent or Contrivance, or actual Performance, appears further from these Instances in them all *Three*.

If we *Lust* so long after any Evil Thing as to Consent to the *sinful Enjoyment* of it, we are guilty of all that Punishment which is threatn'd to it. *He that looks upon a Woman*, says our Saviour, *so long as to lust after her*, or to Consent in his Heart to the Enjoyment of her, *he hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart*. If we *lust* so long as to contrive for it, which is a Degree further, we are the more guilty of the Sin, and more liable to the Punishment of it still. The *Machinations* and *Contrivances* of *Murder* are reckon'd among those Things which pollute

pollute a Man, and thereby unfit him for entering into Heaven, where nothing can ever have Admittance that is unclean, as well as *Murder* it self is.

But if our *Lust* after any sinful Enjoyment, carry us on, not only to *consent* to it, or to *contrive* for it; but, what is the Perfection of all, to *work* and *fulfill* it; then has it ensnar'd us into as much Mischief as it can, and is become *Dangerous* and *Damning* with a Witness. For then it has prevail'd with us to compleat our Sin, and give the last Hand to it. It has brought us under that which is most of all threaten'd, for we now *fulfill the Lusts of the Flesh*, and work *Iniquity*.

If we continue to do this, not only for once or twice, but in constant Returns and in a fix'd Course, and Tenure of Action; then as our Sin is grown higher, the Acts of it being more numerous, and the Guilt more crying, so will our Punishment also be more dreadfully severe. This is call'd walking after the *Flesh*, and *Living after the Flesh*: 'Tis a State of wasted Virtue, and habitual Reigning Sin; it is not only thro' its *Obnoxiousness* to Punishment a *State of Death*, but also thro' its Hardness of Cure and difficult Recovery, a State of great *Doubt* and *Danger*. The same *Law in the Members* which Wars against the *Law of the Mind*,

Mind, so as thus to Captivate and Triumph over it; as it is the *Law of Sin*, so, as the Apostle says, 'tis the *Law of Death* too. Therefore all our *Lustings* after *Evil*, when once they come to be consented to, tho' before they were conniv'd at, are thenceforth Deadly and Damning. And whoever hopes to be saved at the last Day from the Punishment of them, must thus far mortifie and kill them; *mortifie those Desires*, says St. Paul, *which are seated in your earthly Members*; all *Fleshy Lusts* must of necessity be crucify'd in every good Christian; for no Man will be reputed to belong to Christ till this Change is wrought in him: *They that are Christ's have crucify'd the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*. We must not so mortifie and crucify them, as to have no *Fleshy Appetites* and *Bodily Desires* of Evil; for then must we have no *Desires* at all, because our Senses, as has been observ'd, do not distinguish between *lawful* or *unlawful*, but are naturally mov'd by an agreeable Object, whether it be with God or against him; but we must mortifie them to that degree as that they may never be able to win us over to consent to any forbidden thing for their Gratification. They must never have so much Interest in our Hearts, as to make us prefer them before our Duty; and chuse to perform what they, rather than what God requires. Some
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Stirrings and *ineffective* Motions of them, which cannot prevail against God, nor gain over the Consent of our Wills to any thing that he has forbidden, are dispenc'd with. They are the Stage of Temptation, but not of Death; for God bears with them, and the mortify'd Men themselves do daily feel and labour under them. But it is the prevailing *Strength* of our *Lusts* after Evil things, when they get our Consent to them, and carry us to transgress God's Laws to fulfill them, is that which is to be mortify'd in every good Man, because under its Empire he cannot go to Heaven.

Before a Man can become a good Christian, he has so kill'd the reigning Power of *Lust*, as not to be acted any longer by its Instigation. He feels some small *Stirrings* of it afterwards, but they do not win upon him, nor prevail over him: For he is always ready to deny the Satisfaction of his *Lust*, before he will displease his God, and makes all the *Desires* of his *Flesh* give way to the Dictates of his Conscience: *Ye that are Christ's*, says St. Paul, *have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts.*

When once this is done, there is no great Trouble in it afterwards; for the more any Man is accusom'd to obey, the less Difficulty does he find in *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, and in restraining of all those *Lusts* which

which tempt to *Disobedience*. He is not now in every Temptation put to the Pain and Trouble of *cutting off a right Hand*, or of *plucking out a right Eye*. 'Tis true this Self-denial and Mortification went very near him at first; but since he has been us'd to it, and his Flesh is accustom'd to bear the Yoke, there are no such Pangs and Uneasiness attending it. His Lusts are so far *mortify'd*, as it is absolutely necessary they should be: They are crucify'd to that Degree, as to be disabled from gaining his *Consent* to them, his *Contrivance* for them, or his *Performance* of them. Which is as much Mortification as God will exact of him.

But yet when this is done, and our *Lusts* are *mortify'd* to this Degree, there is still need of a watchful Care of them, and a continual Strife against them, lest they rebel again and go further. For the Objects of Sense, and the Allurements of the Flesh, are still before us, and our Bodies naturally are still as capable to be delighted in them, and to *lust* and *long* after them, as ever they were before. 'Tis only the overpowering Strength of the Law in the Mind or Conscience, which maintains the Resolution of our Wills against them, and by that means keeps them under. Wherefore if once we begin to slacken our Care, and to allow them to go where and how far they

they please, they will quickly grow upon us, and prove too hard for us; bring us first to consent to them, and after that to compleat and fulfill them.

Let no Man therefore indulge to the Thoughts of unlawful Pleasures, and by the *Delights* of his *Fancy* foment and cherish the Desires of his *Flesh*, presuming that all is safe, while he does not consent to them, nor yields to fulfill them. For admitting that all things else are innocent and uncondemning, yet however by this Means he lays a Snare for his own Soul. He throws himself into Temptation, and so cannot expect that God should deliver him out of it. God has promis'd to relieve us indeed in all our Necessities of his own making; and if his Providence throws us upon this Tryal, his Grace shall support us under it, and make way for our Escape out of it. *He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear*, says the Apostles; but together with the Temptation he *will make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear* so much of it as befalls you. But what is this to us, if we bring our selves into Snares, and prove our own *Tempters*? For there is no Reason at all to presume that God, if he will deliver us from other Enemies, should deliver us also from our own selves; and that he should secure us by his Spirit from those

those very Snares which we lay for our own Virtue. If we will entertain Serpents in our Bosoms, he has no where engag'd, nor is there any Reason why he should, that we shall not be stung by them. On the contrary he warns us against them, and bids us be careful to keep off from them. So far must we be from bringing Temptations upon our selves, that, if we will observe his Orders, we must pray daily even against those, to which his Providence may expose us. This being one of those Petitions which according to our Lord's Appointment, we are to put up to God, as often as we do that for our *daily Bread*, *that he would not lead us into Temptation.*

If therefore by indulging to delightful Fancies, and growing Lusts of Evil, we throw our selves into a great Temptation, we have just Reason to fear, least God for our Punishment should leave us in it, and suffer us to fall by it into Perdition; such Indulgence is apt of it self to inflame our Lusts, and to weaken our Resolutions. God also is prone to withdraw his *Grace*, and to leave us to our own Strength upon it; and since at the same time it increases our Necessities, and withdraws our Aids, it must needs put us into a dangerous Condition. To secure our Souls then, and keep us off from Damning Sins, we must resist Temptations at the

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Beginning, and not give way to them; we must not cherish and indulge, but timely check, and heedfully suppress them.

Thus at last we see, what is the just Force of this first Cause of *Fear* to honest Minds, their *ineffective Lusts* and *impotent Desires* of Evil. The first Beginnings of Lust cannot be avoided, and the longer Entertainment of it shall not finally be punish'd, if 'tis soon check'd by us; nay, if it stays longer, and contends much with us, so long as it does not prevail upon us to consent to, and fulfil the *Sin* to which it is a *Temptation*. But when once it has gain'd our Consent and Choice of that Sin to which it would engage us, then it is of a damning Strain, and all its following Effects are Mortal.

Tho' therefore those *Lustings* and *Desires* which good Men complain of, may justly be an Employment of their *Watchfulness* and *Care*; yet ought they not to be a Cause of their *Fear* and *Scruple*; for they shall not bring upon them those Evils they are afraid of, nor ever prove their Ruin and Destruction. The evil Thing is entertain'd only in a Thought, or a Wish. They *lust* after it, and are *tempted* by it; but that is all, for they do not consent to the Temptation. And since their Lusts go no farther, they shall not harm them when Christ comes
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to Judgment, nor ever bring them into *Condemnation*.

Another thing which disquiets the Minds of good and honest Men, and makes them needlessly to call in question the *Saveableness* of their present State, is the *Coldness* and *Unaffectedness*, the *Unsettledness* and *Distractions* which they find in themselves when they are at Prayers; and good People are wont to cry out of *Desertions*, to think that God has thrown them off, and that his Spirit has forsaken them, if at any time they find a great *Distraction* and *Dulness of Spirit* in their Devotions, with a great Abatement of that *Zeal* and *Fervency*, that *Fixedness* and Attention which they have happily enjoy'd at other times.

But this is a great Mistake, arising from Men's Ignorance of God's Laws, and of their own selves. God has no where told them, that he will judge them at the *last Day* by the *Steddiness* and *Fixedness*, the *Tide* and *Fervency* of their *Devotions*, but by the *Integrity* of their *Hearts*, and the *Uprightness* of their *Obedience*. The last Sentence shall not pass upon Men according to the *Heat* of their *Affections*, but according to the *Goodness* of their *Lives*. If they have been careful to practise all God's *Commandments* according to their *Power* and *Opportunities*, and this

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of *Prayer* among the rest, in such sort as their unavoidable Infirmities would suffer them, they shall be safe in that Judgment, notwithstanding any Inequality in their *bodily Tempers*, or Unconstancy and Abatement in their *bodily Affections*.

In the *Duty of Prayer*, as in all other Duties, we are bound so far only as comes under the Power and Choice of our own Wills. And after all our Care and Pains in fixing our Thoughts, and raising of our Desires in Prayer, thro' some bodily Indisposition or unforeseen Accidents, which we cannot help; our Minds sometimes will still run astray, and our Desires be cold and languid. And thus this *unwill'd Dulness* and *Distraction* shall not influence our main State, more than our other *unwill'd Failures* do; 'tis a Thing which no Man can help, or is perfectly free from: Wherefore God will not be severe upon it, but in great Mercy he will pity and connive at it.

For as for the *Attention* of our *Minds*, and the *Fixedness* of our *Thoughts*, either in Prayer or in any other Business; it is a Thing which is not always in our own Power, but may be hinder'd and interrupted by many Accidents whether we will or no. Any thing that makes our *bodily Spirits* tumultuary and restless, disturbs and breaks our Attention.

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Any high Motion of our Blood, or any former Impression upon our Spirits, either by our precedent *Studies*, or our Croud of Business, will make great Variety of Thoughts and roving Fancies to obtrude themselves upon us; and this is our natural Frame and Constitution, which we must submit to, and can never wholly remedy. We can no more prevent it than we can prevent our *Dreams*, when our Fancies are struck by like Impressions. For from the natural Union of our Souls and Bodies, our Minds in their most spiritual Operations of *Thinking* and *Understanding*, go along with our *Bodily Spirits*, and apprehend often their Impressions; and we can as well refuse to see when our Eyes are open, or to taste what is put into our Mouths, as we can refuse to have a Thought of these Things which are imprest upon our bodily Fancy. The Connexion between these is Necessary and Natural, and there is no breaking or avoiding it. Thus let us be either at our Prayers, or at any other Exercise; if any *Temper* of our *Bodies*, any accidental Motion of our Blood, any former Impressions of foregoing Studies, or other Business stir in our Fancies, our *Thoughts* must needs be *diverted*, and our *Attention* disturb'd by them.

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We are more apt to find it thus in our Prayers, than in any other thing. For besides that, in these the Adversary is more busie with us; Men therein often use *Violence*, and screw up the *Fixedness* of their Minds, and the Fervency of their Hearts, to the highest Pitch. And thus their *bodily Spirits* being constrained, are liable not only to be discompos'd by outward Accidents, but also to give back and fall of themselves; and when in this manner they withdraw, there is room made, till they can be recollected again, for other Thoughts to arise instead of them.

Indeed we may, and ought to strive against these *Distractions* as much as we can, and to compose our Thoughts as much as our natural Temper, or our present Circumstances will suffer us. When they wander in our Prayers, as soon as we discern it, we may recollect them; and when other Thoughts intrude, as soon as they are observ'd we may reject them. But then this is all that we can do, or that God requires we should do, for we cannot *pray* perfectly and continuedly without them.

As for the *Zeal* and Fervency of our Affections, whether in our Prayers, or any Thing else, they are various and very changeable, and do not depend so much upon the
Choice

Choice of our *Wills*, as upon the *Temper* of our *Bodies*. Some upon every Occasion are more warm and eager in their Passions, either of *Love* or *Hatred*, *Hope* or *Fear*, *Joy* or *Sorrow*, than other Men either are or can be. For there's a Difference in *Temper*s, as well as in *Palates*, and Men's Passions do no more issue out upon the same Things, in the same *Eagerness*, than their *Stomachs* do after the same *Food* with the same Degrees of *Appetite*; wherefore, every Man cannot work himself up to a great *Fervency* and vehement *Affection*; because all *Temper*s do not admit of it. 'Tis more a Man's *Temper* than his *Choice*; and it is not to be expected, that all People should be able to raise themselves up to a transporting Pitch therein, but only that they should who are born to it.

They whose natural *Temper* fits them for a great *Fervency* and a *high Affection*, are not able to work themselves up to it at all *Times*; for no Man's *Temper* is constant and unchangeable. Our *Bodies* are subject to a thousand Alterations, either from Things within us, or from others that are without us. If a Man's Blood is put into an irregular Ferment, either by a cold Air or inward Distemper, or any discomposing Accident; it spoils not only the *Fixedness*

of

of his Thoughts, but also the Zeal of his Actions; and if there be any Damp or Disorder, any Dulness or Indisposition, either upon a Man's Blood or Spirits, the Discomposure of his Body is presently felt in his Soul. His Thoughts flag, and his Passions run low, all his Powers are under a Cloud and suffer an Abatement.

This every Man finds in himself when he labours under a *sickly* and *crazy* Temper, an *aching* or a *cloudy* Head, or any other bodily Indisposition; for our *Passions* are *bodily Leavers*, and are manag'd by *bodily Instruments*; they live and dye with them, and are subject to all their Coolings and their Changes: Wherefore, as long as our *bodily Dispositions* vary, and by reason of a Number of Accidents are still changeable and inconstant, the Zeal and Fervency of our Affections must needs be so too, which sure we cannot help. God will not be always angry, or eternally torment us for them. His Love and Favour to us will not alter, as our unsettled Thoughts or bodily Tempers do.

We ought, according to our present Circumstances and Dispositions, to be as fervent and affectionate in Prayer as we can, to recall our Thoughts when we observe them to wander. If we do this, we need

not doubt but our involuntary Distractions shall not hinder our *Devotions* being accepted by God, and the Blessings which we sue for being obtain'd. If our Prayers are sometimes less Intent and less Affectionate than at others they are, and we at all times greatly desire they might be, yet shall they be heard by our Father who is in Heaven: For our *Fixedness* and *Fervency*, tho' they are great good Things, and such as we must take care still to be provided with when we pray, yet are not the only Qualifications of our *Prayers* which prevail with God and move him to hear them. Our *holy Love* and *humble Fear*, our *Trust* and *Dependence*, *Submission* and *Resignedness*, and other spiritual Virtues and Instances of Obedience, are also Dispositions which God respects in them; nay, which he prizes above all and principally looks at. Therefore as long as our Hearts are honest, and our Lives entirely obedient, we are always furnish'd with those Qualifications which are sufficient to bring down God's Grace and Blessing upon us, and which are the principal Things that make our Prayers themselves an acceptable Offering. And if at any time a good Man's Devotions are less perfect than he desires they should be, that Defect will be otherwise supply'd, and he will have all that
 Mercy

Mercy convey'd to him thro' other Means, which his *Prayers* should have obtain'd for him; for that which makes his *Prayers* procure God's Love and Mercy for him, will make his Obedience procure the very same.

Let a Man make sure in the first Place of a *good Life*, and of an honest and entire Obedience, and then he need not fear to want those Things which all good Men have need to pray for. He cannot perish for want of those Mercies for which he *prays*, tho' it be sometimes (and will be, do what he can) with Coldness and Distracti-on; because not only the other obedient Performance of his *Prayers*, however thro' some unchosen Hindrances a due Fixedness and Fervency are wanting, but also the constant and uninterrupted Obedience of his Life is daily ascending up, and brings them down upon him.

Let no *good Soul* then be further troubled and disquieted on this Account, as if, because after all his Care, his *Prayers* are sometimes *Dull* and *Cold*, and his Thoughts therein much distracted, he shall either be eternally punish'd for them, or at least go without the Blessings he desires in them. For as long as the *Spirit of Obedience* appears, both in his *Prayers* and in his Actions, the

unwill'd Distractions of the *Mind*, and the *Dulness* and *Frozenness* of his *Affections* at sometimes, shall be no hindrance either to his Suit at present, or to his *Happiness* hereafter: his Request shall not be thrown by, nor be condemn'd for them; but so far as God sees it fitting for him, it shall be granted, and he shall notwithstanding be eternally saved.

A Third *Scruple* which is wont causelessly to disgust and trouble honest Minds, is the Words of our Saviour, *I say unto you, that as concerning every idle Word which Men shall speak, they shall give an Account thereof at the Day of Judgment.*

This seems to be a strict and severe Saying; for in all the Croud and *Variety* of *Converse*, in the infinite Numbers of *Questions* and *Answers*, and other Occasions of Discourse, what Man in all the World, but especially those who are of a *Conversation* that is *Free* and *Open*, *Courteous* and *Ingenuons*, *Chearful* and *Delightsome*, which Temper the Gospel does not only allow but approve of; Who, I say, of all Men, but of Men of this Make especially, among all the Occasions of *Speech*, can avoid a *multitude of Words*? And where much is said, how can it be but that much must be Idle and Impertinent?

This

This sometimes works very melancholy Effects, for it frights Men from all the innocent *Freedom*s of *Converse*, and the chearful *Entertainments* of *Company*. It makes them to appear *stay'd* and *reserv'd*, *silent* and *morose*, to contribute nothing to the *harmless Mirth* and *Chearfulness* of *Conversation* themselves, and to frown upon it in others. For all *Converse* and *Society* are manag'd by the *Tongue*, and the ordinary *Entertainment* of *Company* is *Talking* and *Discourse*; but where Men think every idle and useless Word so dangerous a Sin, they are afraid to speak. All that comes from them is steady and deliberate, grave and compos'd; they neither dare use any Freedom themselves, nor can, without Offence, observe it to be us'd by others.

But this is so far from being enjoin'd by Christ, that it is discountenanc'd by Nature. 'Tis so far from being a Piece of Religion, and a holy Duty, that 'tis rather a Piece of Immorality and ill Manners. And as it is discountenanc'd by Nature, so is it also by the Laws of Christ. For whatever some Men may think of it, or how innocently soever they may be led into that Conceit about it, yet is it a *Temper* which Christ never intended to plant among us. His coming into the World was after another way, in a

free Use of the innocent Allowances and Liberties of Mankind. The *Son of Man*, says St. *Matthew*, came *Eating and Drinking*, not in the singular Austerities of *John the Baptist*, but in a *free way of Conversation*, such as others us'd. His Religion enjoyns the Virtues of *Candour and Benignity, Affability and Courtesy*, an open *Freedom and Alacrity*, and all those other Ways by which our Conversation may be render'd innocently agreeable, and by which we may in any-wise benefit, whether by profiting or pleasing one another. *Whatsoever things*, says St. *Paul*, are lovely, or grateful to *Men*, think on these things. Love is the Epitome of our whole Duty, and all the Sweetnesses and Endearments of Society that can be, so long as they are lawful and honest, are not only consistent with it, but Parts and Expressions of it.

As for the grave Entertainments of Discourse and religious Conference, they, without doubt, have a great Use, and in their Place may deserve a great Commendation. For good Christians may be much better'd and improv'd by having their *Graces* awaken'd, their pious *Affections* enflam'd, their holy Purposes fix'd and settled, their Endeavours directed and encourag'd, and every Thing that is good in them quicken'd and

and confirm'd by Religious Conversation. But then 'tis to be consider'd, that even *good Things* themselves must be taken in their *own season*, and must not be suffer'd to engross all Time; a great Part of which is to be spent upon other Things. For we have not only one Thing to do, but at several Times several Things call for us. *There is a Time*, says the Wiseman, *to every Thing, and a Season to every Purpose under Heaven. There is a Time to Weep, and a Time to Laugh; a Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance.* There is a Time for Diversion, as well as a Time for Business; a Time wherein to have a more liberal and free Discourse, as well as a Time for grave and godly Conference. Farther, the innocent Delights of Conversation, and pleasurable Entertainments of Discourse, are themselves a great *Field of Virtue*, and an *Exercise*, and Occasion of many Instances of *Obedience*. For in *that* we may every one of us Exercise in our own Persons, and be Examples to others of, much *Courtesy* and *Kindness*, *Civility* and *Condescension*, *Affability* and *Obligingness*.

Let no Man think then, that his Hours of Common Conversation are always *lost* Hours; and that whatever Time he spends upon *Offices of Civility*, and *Freedom of Company*, is misplac'd and stol'n from God and

Religion. For we are fulfilling God's Laws, while, as Occasion requires, we keep all these Commandments in the Pleasurable Entertainments of Common Life. They are such Business as he has set for us, and our Obedient Performance of them must pass for his *Service*, as well as *Devotion*, Holy Conference and Meditation.

'Tis no Prejudice or Hindrance to Religion therefore, to be free and open in *Conversation*, and pleasant and chearful in *Common Life*, but rather an Instance and Expression of it. 'Tis no Part of any Man's Duty to be talking always in *Scripture-Phrase* and *Sanctify'd Expression*, or else to be wholly silent, and severely morose, and not to talk at all. For an Innocent Chearfulness, and Freedom of Discourse, is not the Good Man's Sin, but the Exercise of his Virtue and Obedience.

But as for that Opinion, that every Idle and Impertinent Word shall be severely accounted for at the Day of Judgment, which is the great Sourer of Conversation, and the Occasion of this Conceit, it is a great Mistake: For 'tis not every *idle* and *unprofitable*, but every *false*, *slandorous*, or otherwise *sinful* and *unlawful Word*, of which our Saviour speaks. As for the *Word* which is translated *Idle*, it may signifie *false* and *deceitful*,

ful, as those *Words* are which *belye* our *Works*, when our *Actions* do not answer them. And this is agreeable to the Use of the Word *Vain*, which sometimes signifies the same as *False* and *Lying*. 'Tis us'd in the latter Sense in the *Third Commandment*, where we are bid not to take the Name of God in *Vain*; that is, in *Perjury* and *Falshood*. For this is the Sense our Saviour gives it in his Repetition of the *Commandment*; *It hath been said to them of Old, saith He, i. e. in the Third Commandment, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, or swear falsely.*

But if nothing more than *useless* and *unprofitable* were noted by the Word itself, which we translate *Idle*; yet it is no unusual Thing in the Scriptures, by several Words to mean and intend more than in their Literal Sense they do express. Thus are the *abominable Works of Darknes* call'd *Unfruitful Works*, where the meaning surely is, not only that they bring in no Profit or Advantage, but also that they are most deadly and mischievous; and the *Unfaithful Wicked Servant*, spoken of by St. *Matthew*, is call'd the *Unprofitable Servant*. After the same Use of Speech, our Words, which do not only tend to none, but to very ill Fruit, may be call'd *Idle* or *Unprofitable Words*; and so they are in this Place. For the *Idle Words* of which our Sa-

viour speaks, are such Words as are not only Idle and Unprofitable, but positively *Wicked* and *Evil*, being indeed *false*, *slandrous*, and *reviling* Words; such as are a Sign not only of a *trifling*, but of an *Evil Heart*. *How can ye*, says Christ, *being Evil, speak good Things*; for out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh. Thus as a Good Man, out of the good Treasure of his Heart bringeth forth, or speaketh good Things, an Evil Man likewise out of the Evil Treasure of his Heart bringeth forth Evil Things: And being the Fruits of an Evil Heart, they are the sign not of an *Impertinent*, but of an *Evil Man*. The Tree is corrupt, if the Fruit be corrupt; for the Tree is known by its Fruit. And since they are such Words as are thus sinful in themselves, and an Argument of so much Sin in us, in the Last Judgment they shall be charg'd upon us to condemn us. For by thy Words, says our Saviour, as well as Actions, *shalt thou be justified*; and by thy Words, if they be such idle Words as I mean, *shalt thou be condemned*. Words of this black Die, and of these mischievous Effects, are not every idle and impertinent, but false, slanderous, railing, or otherwise sinful and forbidden Words. But false and slanderous Words are especially struck at in this Place; such as were those lying and contumelious Ones that occasion'd

tion'd all this Discourse, when the *Jews* most reproachfully charg'd Christ's *Miracles* upon the Devil; telling him, *he cast out Devils thro' Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils*. Upon occasion of which black Calumny, he warns them against such *blasphemous Speeches*; demonstrating clearly the *Unreasonableness* of them, the *Sinfulness* of them, and the *mischievous Effects* of them. Such reproachful Words as these, let me tell you, says he, you shall be call'd to an Account for, as well as for your Works and Actions. *I say unto you, that every idle, or slanderous and reproachful Word (such as now you have spoken against me) that Men shall speak, they shall give an Account thereof in the Day of Judgment*. For when that Day comes, think you of it as you please; all Men's Words, as well as their Actions, shall be call'd to an Account: *By thy Words thou shalt be Justified; and (if they have been such as yours now are) by thy Words thou shalt be condemned*.

Another Causeless Ground of Fear which disquiets the Minds, and affrights the Hearts of good Christian People, is the Sin against the *Holy Ghost*; they hear very dreadful Things spoken of it: For our Saviour Christ, who knew it best, and who at the Last Day is to judge of it, has told us plainly beforehand, *That he who blasphemeth the Holy Ghost, shall*

shall never be forgiven; neither in this World, nor in the World to come. In St. Mark it is, he shall never have Forgiveness, but is liable to Eternal Damnation. This is a fearful Sentence upon a Desperate Sin; and seeing they are in Darknes about it, they know not but that they themselves may be guilty of it; nay, some of a timorous Temper and weak Spirit go farther, and think they really are.

But to cure their *Fears*, and quiet their *Minds* in this Matter, there needs nothing more be done, than to give them right Apprehensions and a clear Explication of this *Sin*. For if they once knew what it is, they wou'd be at Ease from such tormenting Suspicions and unreasonable *Fears* about it.

To explain this, I will consider what is meant in Scripture by the *Holy Ghost*, or *Holy Spirit*. And according to an usual *Metonymy* of the Giver for the Gift, or of the Cause for the Effect, by the *Holy Spirit*, or *Holy Ghost*, is very often meant *the Gift or Effects of the Holy Spirit*; whether they be such as he *ordinarily* produces in us, or such as are *Extraordinary* and *Miraculous*.

Sometimes it signifies such *Gifts* and *Dispositions*, whether of Mind or Temper, as the *Holy Ghost* or *Spirit of God* is wont ordinarily

to produce in Men. It notes the good Qualifications of our *Minds* or *Understandings*, which as well as all other good Gifts are wrought in us by the Spirit, and derived to us from God. Thus a Man endu'd with Wisdom and Discretion, such as *Joseph* advis'd *Pharaoh* to set over all the Land of Egypt, is call'd a Man in whom the Spirit of God is. And the Spirit of the Lord, mention'd in *Isaiah*, Chap. 11. is in the very next words explain'd by the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of Knowledge, and the Spirit of quick Understanding. It signifies also the *Virtuous Tempers* and good Qualifications of our Hearts, which, like as the former were, are given us of God. Thus that good and charitable Temper, which is so Exemplary in God, and which is wrought in our Souls by him, is call'd the Spirit of God. If we love one another, God dwells in us. Again; Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and He in us, because he hath given us that loving Temper of his Spirit; the Temper which was so observable in *Christ*, is call'd the Spirit of *Christ*; the Temper of *Elias* is call'd the Spirit of *Elias*; the Spirit of the Lord is explain'd by the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord, and that Spirit which God hath given us, says *St. Paul*, is not the Spirit of Fear, but the Spirit of Power, of Love, and of a sound Mind. Thus
does

does the Spirit of God signifie many times in Scripture those ordinary Gifts and Graces which are the good Effects of the Spirit.

But besides these Effects of it in the good Endowments and Perfections of our Natural Faculties, whether of *Mind* or *Temper*, which are *Common* and *Ordinary*; it sometimes signifies more especially those Gifts which are *Extraordinary* and *Miraculous*. Of which sort are the Gifts of *Tongues*, of *Prophecy*, of healing Diseases without natural Means, and performing other *miraculous Operations*, so famous in the first Times of the Gospel. Thus for Example, that Saying, *I will pour out in those Days of my Spirit*, is interpreted by this in the next Words, *And they shall prophesie*. And the *double Share* of the *Prophe-tick Power of Elias*, is call'd a *double Portion* of his Spirit. And the *Corinthians* zealous Pursuit of the *miraculous* and *extraordinary* Gifts of *Prophecy*, *speaking with Tongues*, *healing Diseases*, and *working Miracles*, is call'd by the Apostle, their being *zealous of Spirits*, or, of *spiritual Gifts*.

Now as for these extraordinary Gifts, they are all wrought in us by the same Cause, and proceed from the same Principle, the *holy Spirit* of God, or the *holy Ghost*. There are in the Church, now in our Times, says the Apostle, *Diversities of Gifts*,
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but yet one and the same Spirit is the Giver of them all. For to One is given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom, or of Gospel-Truths and Revelation; to another the word of Knowledge, or prophetical Predictions, and Discerning of remote Things, by the same Spirit. To another miraculous Gifts of healing Diseases, without Use of Means, by the same Spirit. To another the working of Miracles, or the utmost Activity and Energy of Powers in the highest Instances and Effects of them; of which sort are raising the Dead, casting out Devils, inflicting bodily Torments on contumacious Sinners, &c. And to another Prophecy or Exposition of Scripture, and inspir'd Hymns. To another discerning of Spirits, both in seeing into Men's spiritual Thoughts and Intentions; and also in discerning who wrought true Miracles, and who Satanical Delusions, who were divinely inspir'd, and who were mere Pretenders. To another, the extatick Gift of speaking divers Kinds of Tongues in such rapturous Transports, as permitted them not to stay to interpret what they said, and made them afterwards forget it; To another the Gift of interpreting those strange Tongues into the vulgar Language of any of the Congregation. But all these Diversities of Gifts worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing all these

these different Gifts to every Man severally as he will.

And seeing it is the same Spirit or Holy Ghost which is the Author and Giver of them all, therefore are they all indifferently call'd by either Name; for sometimes all these extraordinary Gifts, both the Power of Miracles and the Gift of Tongues, and Propheſie, are called the Spirit. Thus when the Apostles began to speak with Tongues, and to Propheſie, as well as to work Miracles, and heal Diseases, it is said that the Spirit was poured out upon them. And all those Varieties of Gifts of one sort or other, which are reckon'd up by St. Paul in the Twelfth Chapter to the Corinthians, are attributed to the Spirit, and said to be wrought by it. The Apostles being fill'd with the Holy Ghost and speaking with Tongues, is call'd their speaking by the Spirit. They were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, says St. Luke, and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. At other times, all the same Powers, whether of Understanding or Action, of Tongues or Miracles, are called the Holy Ghost. Thus the Gifts of Signs and Wonders and divers Miracles, are reckon'd among the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. God, says St. Paul, bearing the Apostles Witness with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and other Gifts of the Holy Ghost. And the Signs and Wonders which

which were done by the *Hands of the Apostles*, particularly that of *Healing the lame Man*, so much taken notice of, is said to be the *Witness of the Holy Ghost*.

Thus by reason that all these extraordinary Gifts, whether relating to our Minds in *Knowledge* and *speaking with Tongues*, or to our executive Power in *healing Diseases* and *working Miracles*, proceeded all from the self-same *Holy Ghost* or *Holy Spirit*. The Gifts of either Sort are call'd indifferently by either Name, sometimes the *Spirit* and sometimes the *Holy Ghost*.

But tho' for this Reason the Words *Spirit* and *Holy Ghost* are sometimes us'd promiscuously, to signify all or any of these extraordinary Gifts indifferently, yet (which is very material to our Purpose) sometimes, nay very frequently, they are distinguished. And then by the *Holy Ghost* is meant not all extraordinary Gifts indifferently, but particularly those which respect our *Understandings*, not executive Powers, consisting rather in *Illumination* than in *Power* and *Action*; of which Sort are the *Gift of Tongues*, of *Prophecy*, of *discerning Spirits*, of *Knowledge*, of *Revelation*, and such like: Thus the *Lying* against that Part of the Gift of *discerning Spirits* is called *Lying to the Holy Ghost*. For *St. Peter*, who was endow'd with this Gift,

Gift, tells *Ananias* when he would have impos'd upon him, *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lie to the Holy Ghost.* And St. *Stephen* being call'd with an extraordinary Revelation of Christ's sitting at God's Right Hand in Heaven, is call'd his *being fill'd* with the Holy Ghost; but more especially the Gift of *Tongues* and of *Prophecy* are dignify'd with that Name. When the *Gentiles*, in *Cornelius's* House began to speak with *Tongues*, upon St. *Peter's* Preaching, 'tis said, that *the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word*, and that *on the Gentiles* was poured out the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

The Disciples at *Ephesus*, who being Baptiz'd into the *Baptism* of *John*, cannot be supposed ignorant of the many miraculous Cures so much talk'd of among the *Jews*, and of the strange Effects of the Spirit in *Jesus*, whom *John* Preach'd, did yet tell *Paul* that *they had not so much as heard of the Holy Ghost*; which might very well be, because the *Holy Ghost* or *Gifts of Tongues* and *Prophecy* were not given till after *Jesus* was glorify'd, but upon the Preaching of St. *Paul* they were made Partakers of it; for when *Paul* laid his Hands on them, the *Holy Ghost* came upon them, and they spake with *Tongues* and prophesy'd.

Thus is the *Holy Ghost* sometimes put to denote, not all the *miraculous* and *extraordi-*
nary

many Gifts of the Spirit promiscuously, but particularly those which respect the *Mind* or *Understanding*, such as the Gift of *Tongues*, of *Prophecy*, of *deep Knowledge*, and the like.

The word *Spirit* is sometimes put to express not all extraordinary Gifts and Effects of the Spirit in general, but those by Name which respect our *Executive*, not *Knowing Powers*, and which consist not in *Illumination* but in *Action*; of which some are the Gifts of *healing Diseases*, of *casting out Devils*, of *raising the Dead*, and other miraculous Operations. Thus the miraculous Courage and Valour which was given to *Othoniel*, is call'd the *Spirit of the Lord*; as is that likewise which was given to *Gideon*; and the miraculous Strength of *Sampson* is call'd the *Spirit of the Lord upon Sampson*; and upon Christ's working the miraculous Cure on the Man with the *wither'd Hand*, St. Matthew applies to him the Saying of the Prophet, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him*. Christ himself attributes his *casting out Devils* to the *Spirit of God*: *I*, says he, *by the Spirit of God cast out Devils*.

As by the *Holy Ghost* therefore are meant particularly, the Gifts of *Illumination* in *Tongues* and *Prophecy*; so by the *Spirit* are signify'd the Gifts of *Power* in *healing Diseases*.

seases, casting out Devils, and doing mighty and miraculous Works.

Both these together take up the full Compass of the *extraordinary Gifts* of the *Spirit*, and are both distinctly exprest by *St. Peter*, when he said that *Jesus* was anointed with the *Holy Ghost* and with *Power*. These then are the several Meanings of the words *Holy Ghost* and *Holy Spirit*; they denote, as the *third Person* in the *Trinity* the *Holy Ghost* himself, so also the *Effects* which proceed from him. And thus having shewn what is meant by the *words*, we are in the next Place to shew

What is meant by Sinning against the *Holy Ghost*, and which of all those *Sins* that are committed against it is the *unpardonable Sin*.

The only way by which Men are capable of Sinning against God, is by *Affront* and *Disshonour*. God is out of our Reach for any other sort of Injury, and we cannot otherwise hurt him than by shewing our Contempt and Disrespect of him.

Now in regard that the *Holy Ghost*, as our *Church* teaches us, is *very* and *essential* God, this must needs be the only way by which we can Sin against Him also: We cannot injure him in his *Nature*, but only in his *Honour*; but then we Sin against him

him when we *walk cross to him* and *oppose him*, or any way *slight* and *contemn*, undervalue or reproach him, or any of those excellent and divine Gifts which proceed from him.

We do this more or less in every *Sin*. For this Spirit of God is an universal *Instrument of Faith* and *good Life*. It has taken the utmost Care by *Miracles*, and other its convictive Evidences, to evince the *Truth* of Christ's Doctrine; and does now still by his *daily Suggestions* and *Sollicitations*, excite Men to the observance of it. The *Spirit of God* has shewn it self so much concern'd for our *Faith* and *Obedience*, that every act of *Unbelief* and *Disobedience* is a direct Opposition to it, and Reproach of it, and therefore is a *Sin* against it.

But every *Sin* is not the *unpardonable Fault* here mention'd: For our *wilful Sins* themselves are not desperate under Christ's Religion: The *Gospel* is a *Covenant* that does not damn Men upon all *Voluntary Sin*, but encourages their Repentance with the Promise of Pardon. Thus, tho' all our Sins are against God and his Spirit, they are not *irremissible*, but will be forgiven to every Man who repents of them.

The *unpardonable Sin* is a Sin by it self. It has something peculiar in it from all other
Sins,

Sins, which by shutting us out from all possibility of *Repentance*, excludes us from all Hopes of being forgiven.

This Sin is taken to be plainly this; *A Sinning against the Holy Ghost, by railing and blaspheming the Power of Miracles, the Gift of Tongues, and other Illuminations of the Holy Spirit which came down upon the Apostles at Pentecost.* This and none other is taken to be the Sin here mention'd. For the clearer discerning of which we will consider the *Sins* against the *Holy Ghost* in all Acceptations; and in all of them, except the last, we shall find room for *Pardon* and *Remission*.

To *Sin* against the *Holy Ghost*, as it signifies the *Ordinary Endowments and Virtuous Tempers* of our Minds and Wills, is not the *unpardonable Sin* here spoken of; for every *Sin* against any particular *Virtue* is a *Sin* against the *Holy Ghost*, in that Sense; every Act of *Drunkenness*, for instance, is against the *Gift of Sobriety*; and every Act of *Uncleanness* is against the *Gift of Continence*; and so it is in the several Actions of all other Sorts of *Sin*. But now as for all these, the great Offer and Invitation of the Gospel is, that Men would accept of *Mercy* upon *Repentance*. The *Incestuous Corinthian* sinn'd deeply against the *Grace of Chastity*, and he repented and was forgiven; *St. Peter* deny'd his

Lord,

Lord, and upon his *Repentance* he was also pardon'd; and the same Grace has been allow'd to all other wilful *Sinners*.

Nay, in this sort of Sinning against the *Holy Ghost* there is *Mercy* to very great *Degrees*; for sometimes we do not hearken to his *holy Motions*, but fall into more ordinary Sins, and offensive Indecencies, notwithstanding all his virtuous Suggestions and Endeavours to the contrary. He is then troubled and griev'd at us; and at other time we venture upon more heinous Crimes, and after much Conflict too within our selves, which almost quite lays waste the Conscience, and undoes all the virtuous Temper and Resolution of our Souls. We lye long in our *Impenitence*, as *David* did in the Matter of *Uriah*, and are almost harden'd in our wicked Way, before we are able again to recover out of it. The *Spirit* has been so much affronted in these Offences, and his importunate Suggestions so frequently thrown out, that he is almost ready to forsake us, and to leave us to our selves. Thus it may be call'd a *quenching of him*: But tho' the last of these especially be very dangerous, yet is neither of them desperate. After we have been guilty of them, God continues still to make Offers and Invitations, and by his Long-sufferance, and gracious Providence,
by

by the repeated Calls of his Word and Ministers, he still endeavours to recover us to Pardon by recalling us to *Repentance*; therefore, the *Sinning* against the *Holy Ghost*, as it signifies the ordinary *Gifts* and *Graces* of the *holy Spirit*, is far from being the *unpardonable Sin*: Nor is a Sin against the *extraordinary Gifts* of *casting out Devils*, *healing Diseases*, *working Miracles*, that *unpardonable Sin* which is here intended.

'Tis true, to *blaspheme the Spirit* comes very near it; and when Men are once gone so far, God is very nigh giving of them up, and using no more Means about them to bring them either to *Faith* or *Repentance*, which are the only way to *Pardon* and *Forgiveness*. But tho' this Pitch of Sin be extreme dangerous, yet in great likelihood it is not wholly desperate. For after all the *Dirt* that Men had thrown upon this Evidence, in the *Miraculous Operations* wrought by Christ while he continued upon Earth, God was still pleas'd to use some Means further to bring them to *believe* and *repent*, which is the way to be *pardon'd*, and that was the Evidence of the *Holy Ghost*, which came down to compleat all after *Jesus* was *glorify'd*. This great Proof was pour'd out upon the Disciples at *Pentecost*, and upon other Christians at the Imposition of their Hands, for a good while

while after, and might effect that wherein the other had fail'd, and be acknowledg'd by those very Men who had *blasphemed* the former. Their Case therefore, notwithstanding it was gone so far, was not for all this quite hopeless, because one Remedy still remain'd, which God resolv'd he would use to reclaim them from their *Infidelity*, tho' after that he would try no more.

Of this I think we have a clear Proof, even in those *blasphemous Pharisees*, whose *reviling of the Spirit* was the occasion of all this Discourse: For as for the *Spirit*, they blasphem'd it in that very Passage, when upon occasion of the *miraculous Cure of the Man with the withered Hand*, and of Christ's *casting out of Devils*, (both which were so manifestly wrought before their Eyes that none of them durst question or deny the working of them) they go blasphemously to charge these evident Effects of the *Spirit* upon the *Power of Magick*, and to say that these Works of God were perform'd by the Devil. For when these mighty Effects of the Spirit were urg'd to them in behalf of Jesus, they answer'd and said, *This Fellow doth not cast out Devils but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*. Here is a Reproach to these miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, as great as can be invented; for 'tis nothing

less than an attributing them to the most foul and loathsome Fiends in Nature, even to the very *Devils themselves*; but yet this *Blasphemy*, as dangerous as it was, is not utterly exclusive of *Faith* and *Repentance*, and thereby *Unpardonable* and *Hopeless*. For our Lord himself, in this very Chapter, speaks still of seeking their *Repentance*, and gives them a Promise that some further Means should be still us'd to cure their Infidelity after they had blasphem'd thus, telling these very Men, that the Sign of his *Death* and *Resurrection*, with the other Evidences of the *Holy Ghost* which were to ensue upon it, should be a further Argument to satisfy them in what they enquir'd after, *his being the Messiah or the Son of God*. For when certain of the *Pharisees*, presently upon finishing this Discourse of their blaspheming of the Holy Spirit, made answer to him, saying, *Master, we would see a Sign from thee*, to confirm to us the Truth of that Pretension: He answered, *An Evil and Adulterous Generation seeketh a Sign, and there shall no further Sign be given to it, but only the Sign of the Prophet Jonas*, and that indeed shall. For as *Jonas* was three Days and three Nights in the *Whales Belly*, and was afterwards deliver'd out of it to go and Preach to the *Ninevites*, so shall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights

Nights in the Heart of the Earth, and after that rise again to preach by his Apostles to you and all the World, sending to you for a further Evidence still, the *Holy Ghost*.

And this *Unpardonableness* of *blaspheming the Spirit*, our Saviour farther intimates in that very Place, by a wary Change of the Phrase when he comes to speak of the *unpardonableness* of it, calling the *unpardonable Blasphemy* not a *Blasphemy against the Spirit*, who was the *Spirit* which was indeed *blasphemed*, and of which he had just made mention, but a *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, which being as *St. John* says not yet given, could not yet be blasphem'd.

The *desperate* and *unpardonable Sin* is a Sin against the last and greatest Evidence of all, the *Gift of Tongues*, of *Prophecie*, and of other Things, called the *Holy Ghost*. After all the other Evidence that came before, to win Men to a Belief of Christ's Religion, which is the only Means of Pardon to the World, God had still a Reserve, and resolv'd upon some further Course if they prov'd ineffectual. If the *Testimony of John Baptist* to Christ's being the *Lamb of God*; If the *Message of an Angel* at his Conception; the *Star* at his Birth; and the *Choir of Angels* at his Entrance into the World: If the *Innocency* of his Life; the *Wisdom* of his Words; and the

Mightiness of his Wonders; in commanding the *Winds and Seas*; in curing *Diseases*; in casting out *Devils*; in restoring the *Weak to Strength* and the *Dead to Life*: If all these prove unsuccessful, and unable to perswade an *Infidel* and *perverse Generation*, yet still God resolves to try one means more, which before that time the World never saw nor heard of, and that is the ample and most full Effusion of the *Holy Ghost* upon the Apostles at *Pentecost*, and upon others at the Imposition of their Hands for a long time after.

But when once God had given this Proof, he had done all he design'd: For this is the last Remedy which he had decreed to make use of to cure the Infidelity of an Unbelieving Age. If therefore Men shall use it, as they have done all that went before it; if instead of being perswaded by it, they shall proceed not only to *sight* and *despise*, but what is more, to *revile* and *blaspheme* it; then is the irreversible Decree gone out against them, and God is unalterably resolv'd to strive no more with them, but to let them die in their Unbelief. If they should be won by it indeed, and believe upon it, be their former Offences what they will (no less than a *blaspheming of the Spirit*) yet may they justly expect to be *pardon'd*. For the
Offer

Offer of Grace is universal: *Whofoever believes and is baptiz'd shall be sav'd*: And again, *Nothing is impossible to him that believeth*; but when once Men have gone so far as to be guilty of this, their Sin is *unpardonable*, because their *Faith* is *impossible*; for they have rejected all the Evidence which any Man can urge for their Conviction, seeing they have despised all that which God has offer'd. Their *Infidelity* is stronger than can be cured by any Argument that Christ either has or will afford to prevail over it; wherefore they must die in their Sin, and there is no hope for them.

Indeed, if God please, there is no Question, but after they have once *blasphem'd* it, he can still so melt and soften, fashion and prepare their Minds, that afterwards they shall hearken to the incomparable Evidence of the *Spirit* and the *Holy Ghost*, which to an honest Mind is irresistible. But this Sin is of so provoking a Nature, that when once they are guilty of it, he will not; he has past an irreverfible Decree upon them never more to meddle with them: Thus they never will be pardoned, because as Things stand, they never will be reclaimed. This is the very Reason which the Apostle gives of the desperate State of *Apostate Christians*; for by renouncing of that Faith,

which upon the Evidence both of the *Spirit* and the *Holy Ghost* they had been before confirmed in, *they despise*, says he, the *Spirit of Grace*, as it implies both the *Spirit* and *Holy Ghost* too; therefore, as for them, it is impossible to *renew them again unto Repentance*, that being such a Sin as God will never give Repentance to.

The sinning against the *Holy Ghost* in this Sense then, as it denotes the *Gift of Tongues*, of *Prophecy*, &c. which is the last Evidence that God is resolv'd to make use of for the Conversion of an unbelieving World, is that unpardonable Sin which shall never be forgiven.

And yet even here in this limited and contracted Sense of the word *Holy Ghost*, we must still proceed with some Caution. For 'tis not every *Affront* and *Dishonour* that is put upon these *Gifts*, which is the Sin here said to be irremissible. *Simon Magus* cast a very high Indignity and Reproach upon them in his Actions; for he went about to purchase the *Gift of Tongues*, and other sacred *Illuminations*, call'd the *Holy Ghost*, which fell upon Men at the Imposition of the Apostles Hands, as if they had been only a Trick to get Money, or a fit thing to drive a Trade with, and make a gainful Merchandise. *When Simon saw that through the laying on of*

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the Hands of the Apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them Money, saying, Give me all this Power, that on whomsoever I lay Hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. This was a very great Abuse, and a most unworthy comparing of the heavenly and holy Spirit of God to a mercenary Ware, and vendible Commodity, thinking it fit to serve any Ends, and to minister to the basest Purposes of filthy Lucre and Covetousness. But yet this Sin against the *Holy Ghost* in its strictest Acceptation, was not the unpardonable Sin. It came very near it indeed, and 'twould hardly be remitted; yet still in all likelihood it was remissible. And therefore St. Peter, tho' he be very severe upon this sordid Man for the high Affront, does not pronounce an irreverible Doom of Damnation upon him, but on the contrary, exhorts him to repent, that *the Sin of his Heart may be forgiven.* Repent, says he, of this thy *Wickedness*, and pray to God, if perhaps the *Thought of thine Heart may be forgiven.*

That which is the desperately damning Sin against the *Holy Ghost*, which shall never be forgiven below in this World, or that which is to come, is the *sinning* against it not by Interpretation only in our Actions, but directly in our Words and Expressions. It is our speaking reproachfully and slanderously of it, as

the *Pharisees* did of the *Spirit*, when they attributed it to *Beelzebub*. *Whosoever speaketh blasphemously against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come.* The great Weight lies in that, *they said he hath an unclean Spirit*, which brought down this heavy Doom upon them.

Thus at length we see what that Sin against the Holy Ghost is, whose Doom is so dreadful, and whose Case is so desperate under the Gospel. It is nothing less than a *slandering and reviling*, instead of owning and assenting to that last Evidence which God has given us of the Truth of the Gospel, in the Gift of Tongues, Prophecy, and other extraordinary Illuminations, called the Holy Ghost. No Man therefore who owns Christ's Religion, and thinks he was no *Impostor*; who believes that these miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost were no magical Shews, or diabolical Delusions, can ever be guilty of it. Before he arrives to that, he must not only be an Infidel to the Faith, but also a *Blasphemer* of it: He must not only disbelieve this last and great Evidence, but disparage and rail at it. If then there be any Man who owns Christ's Authority, and obeys his Laws, and believes his Gospel, and hopes in its Promises, and fears its Threatnings, and expects that

that every Word of that Covenant, which was confirmed to us by the infallible Evidence of the *Spirit* and the *Holy Ghost*, shall come to pass, he is not more guiltless of any Sin than of this against the *Holy Ghost*; for he does not so much as slight and disparage, but owns and submits to it.

If good Men therefore are afraid, by Reason of the Irremissibleness of the Sin, against the *Holy Ghost*, they fear where they need not, and their *Scruple* is utterly unreasonable and groundless. For let it be as unpardonable as it will, it shall never hurt them. They can never suffer by it, since while they continue such as now they are, they cannot possibly be guilty of it, or of any Thing that comes near it.

Besides these *Scruples* already mentioned, some good Minds may be put in Fear and Doubt of the Safety of their present State, because St. *John* says, that *whosoever is born of God, sinneth not*: Being no longer a *Child of God*, if he do the Sin here spoken of, which is defin'd by St. *John* himself to be not every *Deviation*, or going beside the *Law*, but a wilful *Transgression*, and rejecting of the *Law* it self. This indeed is inconsistent with a regenerate State, and puts us out of God's Favour, making us liable to eternal Damnation. But then the Case for these *Sins* is not

desperate, seeing if once we forsake them, we are as safe again as ever we were before we committed them. For our Repentance will set us straight; and if we transgress not wilfully again, we are without the Reach of Condemnation.

Others doubt whether when once they have wilfully sinn'd, they ever can repent, or shall afterwards be pardon'd; because they read of *Eſau*, that after he had sold his *Birth-right*, with the Blessing that attended it; *when he wou'd have inherited it afterwards, he was rejected, and found no Place of a Change of Mind, or Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears.*

In Answer to this, it will be sufficient to observe, that this Change of Mind or Repentance which *Eſau* sought, but cou'd not find, was not in himself but in his Father *Isaac*.

He found a Place for Repentance in himself, being really full of it. He was heartily sorry for his former Folly, in parting with his *Birth-right*, and for his present Unhappiness, in being cozen'd of his Father *Isaac's Blessing*. He sought to have the Sentence revers'd with bitter Cries and importunate Desires, which clearly shews that *Eſau's* own Mind was chang'd abundantly.

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But that *Repentance* or *Change of Mind* which was necessary to the reversing of the Blessing, for which he labour'd hard, tho' without Effect, was to be wrought in his Father *Isaac*. The good old Man had already pronounced the Blessing upon *Jacob*; and when *Esau* most earnestly intreated him to reverse it, he told him flatly he wou'd not. *I have blessed him*, says he, *and he shall be blessed*. The Story, as it is there recited, being plainly this.

When *Isaac* bid his Son *Esau* provide him some Venison, that he might eat of it, and bless him before he dy'd; *Jacob*, by the Assistance of his Mother *Rebecca*, counterfeited both the Person and the Venison of *Esau*; and going in with it to his Father before *Esau* return'd, craftily stole away the Blessing from him. *Esau* coming in afterwards to receive the Blessing, which *Isaac* his Father had promis'd him, he tells him, that *Jacob* his Brother had come with Subtlety before him, and under a crafty Disguise had taken it away from him. *For I have made him thy Lord*, says he, *and all his Brethren have I given to him for Servants*. Tho' *Esau* intreated his Father to reverse it, and cried as 'tis there said, *with an exceeding bitter Cry*, yet *Isaac* wou'd not change his Mind, or alter what he had pronounced.

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This Reversion of the Blessing, and Repentance or Change of Mind in his Father *Isaac*, was that which *Esau* endeavour'd after, and which, as *St. Paul* says, *he sought carefully with Tears*: But as he observes out of this Story, all was in vain, for it would not be granted him. When he *sought to inherit the Blessing*, his Suit was not granted but rejected; for *Isaac's Decree* was past, and he found no Place of Repentance, or Way to make him change his Mind, though he sought that Change carefully with Tears.

The Apostle speaking of this Thing, does not at all say, that it was impossible for *Esau* to repent of his Sins against God; or that God wou'd not forgive him upon his Repentance; but only that *Isaac* wou'd not repent of his Decree, or reverse that Blessing which he had pronounced upon *Jacob*. Which Inflexibleness of *Isaac* he does indeed make use of in these Verses, to illustrate God's Inexorableness towards some Sinners; but then those are not all wilful Sinners indifferently, but only Apostates; who have wilfully renounced their Christianity, which as we have seen before, is a Sin that God will afford no more Grace or Place of Repentance to. Which appears plainly from the foregoing Verses, Take care, says *St. Paul*, least that which is lame, or the weak Christian, be turned out of the way

way of his Christian Profession through Fears of Persecution. *Look diligently lest any Man fail or fall from the Grace or Gospel of God.* This he exhorted them the more earnestly to do; because if any Man rejects all those Gospel-Blessings and Privileges, which in that Religion they had received, were then offer'd to him, and apostatiz'd from them, God would never afford him the tender of them again, but would be as unalterable in his Decree against him, as *Isaac* was in his against *Esau*. Who, as was shewn by his Story, after once he had miss'd of the Blessing, found no Place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears.

Others again are troubled in Mind, and are afraid lest their Souls are still in Danger, because they do not perceive themselves to grow in Grace, and to be increas'd in Goodness. They complain that their spiritual Life is at a stand, and that they are not more devout and piously affected, more virtuous and better Christians than they were for some considerable time before. This makes them jealous lest they should pass for idle Servants, who have not us'd and improv'd their *Talents*, and who shall be dealt with at the last Day, as if they had abus'd them.

To grow in Grace, we must observe, is the same thing as to grow in Virtue and Goodness,

ness, or to go on to higher Measures of Life and Perfection in any, or in all the Instances of Duty and Obedience. For an Obedient Life, as I have largely shewn, is the sole Instance and Proof of Grace, which can render any of us acceptable in God's sight, and upon which the Gospel encourages us to hope for Pardon and a happy Sentence at the last Judgment. Now if any Man's Life is more perfect than it was; If he grows in knowing and doing Good, and keeping back from Evil; If he begins to have a greater Honour for God, to be more careful to please, and more afraid to offend him; If he is more forward to depend upon his Providence, to trust in his Promises, to resign himself up to his Will, to submit to his Pleasure, to praise him for all his Excellencies, and to perform all his Precepts; If he is more Humble and Heavenly-minded, Chast, Temperate, Just and Charitable; If he is more Meek and Gentle, Courteous and Affable, Quiet and Peaceable; more ready to repair Wrongs, and forgive Injuries than formerly: If he thus advances to *higher Measures*, to *greater Ease*, or to more *Constancy* and *Evenness* of *Obedience* in any or in all Instances of Duty towards God and Men; and that in all Relations, his Virtue is in its Spring; He is still

still going on, and growing in Grace; for which God will accordingly reward him.

One particular Virtue there is, which good Christians are wont to look at more especially in this Matter, and that is *Prayer*. They measure their Growth in Grace by their Improvement in this, and think their *Spiritual Life* is then *most perfect* when their *Devotions* are *most enlarged*. This they conclude they are not, when they are put up with the greatest *Humility and Reverence, Trust and Dependence, Submission and Resignation* to God *Almighty*, or with any other of those *obedient Tempers* imply'd in *Prayer* that are apt to influence our whole Lives; but when they are accompany'd with the most *sensible Joys*, ravishing *Transports*, and unusual Height of *Fervency and Affection*. If then at any time they can pray more passionately, and put forth more intense Desires; If they can work themselves up to more Heavenly Raptures, than ordinarily they have been able to attain to, they fancy they do indeed grow in Grace and are become higher in God's Favour and Acceptance. But if ever this Service happens to be more irksome to them, and they discharge it with much Backwardness and Weariness, Dullness and Indifference, they think God frowns upon them, and has deserted

serted them; that their Grace is in a declining State and sinking down to nothing.

But this is a very uncertain and dangerous Mark for any Man in this Case to judge by, and will very often deceive him that builds upon it. For these fervent Heats, and delightful Transports of Devotion are not so much a *Duty* as a *Privilege*, which all Tempers cannot attain to, but those only that are naturally disposed for it: A Growth in them is therefore not a Growth in *saving Grace*, but rather in sensible Joy and Happiness, and renders us not so truly *gracious* in God's Eyes as *happy* in our own.

Besides, as an Improvement in these Religious and Pleasing Raptures is not a Growth in Grace it self, so neither is it always joyn'd with it, and consequently no sure Argument can be deduced from it; for 'tis easily observable, that several Persons of *Devotional Tempers*, who are usually rais'd up to a high Pitch, and ravish'd with most delightful Transports in their *Prayers*, are yet very *dangerously defective* in many Instances of *necessary Duty*, and a Holy Life. They fall often, even while they enjoy their blissful Heats and Heavenly Raptures of Devotion, into damning Acts of *Fraud* and *Injustice*, *Anger* and *Malice*, *Strife* and *Variance*, *Fierceness* and *Revenge*. They live in them, and

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are habitually enslav'd to them, and yet for all that, they find no want of this *Delight* in *Prayer*, nor any abatement of their devout Intenseness of Mind and earnest Fervour of Affection. However, these Men being so maimed and partial in their Sense, and having no entire Obedience to confide in, they have not Grace enough, as manifestly appears from what has been said upon that Point, to bear them out, nor so much Virtue as God has indispensibly requir'd to save them.

As for these Qualifications of our *Prayers*, those *sensible Joys* and *passionate Transports* which accompany them, they are no Instances of *Obedience* and *saving Grace* themselves, nor any certain Argument that those Persons are endow'd with it, who are allowed to enjoy them. They are frequently found in ill Men, who so long as they rest there and grow no better, cannot reasonably expect to go to Heaven.

But for the other more acceptable and obedient Tempers of our *Prayers*, such as humble Reverence, Truth and Dependance, Submission and Resignedness, &c. which the Men of sober Devotion most justly prefer before the former, as usually most others do when once their *Religious Heats* are over, tho' a Growth in them is truly a Growth in
Grace,

Grace, yet a Growth in them alone is not enough to save us: They indeed in themselves are so many particular Instances of *Obedience*; and besides that, they are also great Means and proper Instruments to produce others. Thus our Growth in them is a Growth in some particular Graces, and a very likely way to grow in others also: But we must still remember, that they are but one Part of *Saving Grace*, and by no means the whole; therefore, till we are grown in others too, we cannot hope to be sav'd by them; for this is the indispensable Condition of the Christian Religion; and this the perfect Man and *just Stature* in the Christian Faith, that we be grown up to an Entire Obedience in all our Voluntary and Chosen Actions, not only to some few but to all the Parts of Duty, and the Laws of God.

But if we would single out some one or some few Virtues from our Growth and Improvement, whereby we may justly presume that we have attain'd to saving Degrees in all the rest; St. *James* directs us to the Duties of the Tongue, in abstaining from Backbiting, Censuring, and Evil-speaking, which under all the Invitations of Conversation, and the Temptation of common Life, is usually the last Point that good Men gain,
and

and that in which they, who scarce ever sin wilfully at all, or very rarely, are wont most frequently, thro' indeliberateness and unadvisedness to miscarry. *If any Man*, says he, *offend not in Word*, but has attain'd to an Innocent and Obedient Guidance of his Tongue, that same Man need not be defective in other Duties, *he is a perfect Man, and able also to bridle the whole Body.*

Thus is Men's Growth in *saving Grace* not only in some one or in some few Virtues, but in an universal and entire Obedience; and then they grow in it when they come to perform the same with more Ease and Pleasure, Constancy and Evenness; with less Mixture of *voluntary Sins*, which need particular Repentance, and with a greater Freedom from Innocent and Unwilled Infirmities. And this Growth every Christian is bound incessantly to endeavour after. The longer he lives, the higher Improvement he ought to make, and to attain every Virtue in a larger Measure, in greater Firmness and Perfection than he had before. *Grow in Grace*, says St. Peter, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Forgetting those things which are behind me*, and already attained, says St. Paul, and *reaching out after those Things which are still before me*, *I press on forward towards the Mark*, that I may acquire

acquire a more compleat Growth than I yet have; and let *as many* among you as *be perfect, be thus minded.*

But then the Obligation to this Growth in this *entire Obedience*, is not laid upon them under the Forfeiture of Heaven, but only of some *higher Rewards* and greater Degrees of Happiness which are to be enjoy'd there. For there are different Degrees of Happiness, answerable to the different Measures of Growth. In this entire Obedience they that perform it most perfectly, shall be rewarded highest; and the more fix'd and perfect they are in it, the less Danger are they under of falling back from it. They who perform it, altho' they miss of that Accession of Reward, which by the Grace of the Gospel is due to an eminent Height of Obedient Endeavours, shall yet obtain the Pardon of their Sins, and a State of Joy and Blessedness in Heaven, as well as they who have endeavoured and performed more.

For our entire Obedience in all chosen Actions, and a particular Repentance and Amendment of all those Sins, in which at any time we have wilfully disobey'd God, is sufficient to secure the Blessedness of the next Life. And therefore, if any Person has us'd God's Grace, and improv'd his Talents to this Measure, he has not been unprofitable.

profitable and useless, but has profited so far as is necessary to his Happiness. While we are yet in the more imperfect Measures of it, and only thirst after a more perfect Obedience, that we may still be more acceptable to God, and have Right to a more noble and excellent Reward, we are in a safe State, and have no need to disquiet our Souls with Fears and Jealousies lest they should eternally miscarry.

Several other *Scruples* there are which are wont to disquiet and perplex the Mind of good and honest People; who are safe in God's Account, tho' their Case seems never so hazardous in their own. Of this sort are their Fear that their Obedience is insincere, because they have an Eye at their own Good, and a Respect to their own Safety; since they serve God in hopes to be better by him, and out of a Fear, should they disobey, of suffering Evil from him. They are afraid also that it is defective in a main Point, for they cannot love and serve him in that comprehensive Latitude which the Commandment requires; *With all their Heart, with all their Soul, and with all their Mind.* They doubt they are past Grace and Pardon, because they have sinned after they have been enlighten'd, and that wilfully; and the Apostle affirms, that for *such there remains*

remains no more Sacrifice for Sins. These *Doubts* are still apt to disturb their Peace and make sad their Hearts, as are also some others of the like Nature.

But we have seen when an honest and entire Obedience is taken care for in the first Place, how plainly *groundless* those *Fears* are which are wont to perplex the Thoughts of the good and safe, yet ignorant and misguided People, about their State of Happiness and Salvation.

Upon the whole Matter, the Sum of all amounts to this; When Christ shall come to sit in Judgment at the last Day, and to pass Sentence of Life or Death upon every Man according to the Direction of his Gospel, he will pronounce upon every Man *according to his Works*. If he has honestly and entirely obey'd the whole Will of God in all the particular Laws before-mentioned; never wilfully and deliberately offending in any Instance, nor indulging himself in the Practice of any Thing which he knows to be a Sin, he is safe in the Accounts of the last Judgment, and shall never come into Condemnation: Nay, if he has been a damnable *Offender*, and has wilfully transgress'd, either in one Instance or in many, in frequent Repetitions of his Sin, or

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in few; yet if he repent of it before Death seize him, and amend it e'er he is hal'd away to Judgment, he is safe still; for he shall be judg'd according as his Works then are, when God comes to enquire of them. Wherefore, if ever he be found in an honest Obedience, observing every thing which he sees to be his Duty, and wilfully venturing upon nothing which his Conscience tells him is sinful; he is found in the State of Grace and Pardon, and if he die in it, he shall be saved; all his unwilling Ignorances, and innocent Unadvisednesses, upon his Prayers for Pardon, and his Mercifulness and Forgiveness of other Men, shall be abated; all his other Causes of *Fear* and *Scruple* shall be *overlook'd*. They shall not be brought against him to his Condemnation, but in the honest and entire Obedience which he has perform'd, he shall live.

If then we have an honest Heart, and walk so as our own Conscience has no wilful Sin yet unrepented of to accuse us of, we may meet Death with a good Courage, and go out of the World with comfortable Expectations. For if we have an honest and a tender Heart, whenever we Sin wilfully, and against our Consciences, our own Souls will be our Remembrancers. They will

will be a Witness against us, both while we are in this World, and after we are taken out of it, and brought to Judgment. *Men's Consciences*, says St. Paul, *shall accuse or excuse them in the Day when God shall judge the Secrets of Men according to my Gospel.*

Indeed if Men have harden'd their Hearts in Wickedness, and sinn'd themselves out of the Belief of their Duty, have come to call *Evil Good*, and *Good Evil*, their Conscience having no farther Sense of Sin, will have no Accusations upon it. But if they really believe the Gospel, and study to know their Duty; if they desire to observe it, and are afraid of offending in any thing which they see is sinful; while thus their Heart is soft, and their Conscience tender, they cannot venture upon any Sin with open Eyes, but their own Hearts will both check them before, and smite them afterwards. They will have a Witness against them in their own Bosoms, which will so scourge and awaken them, that they cannot approach Death without a Sense of their Sin, or go out of the World without Discerning themselves to be guilty.

If our Conscience then cannot accuse us of the wilful and presumptuous Breach of any of God's *Commandments*, and we know of none but what we have repented
of ;

of; we have just Reason to take a good Heart to our selves, and to wait for Death in hopeful Expectations. *If our own Hearts condemn us not, says St. John, then have we confidence towards God.* There is no Sin that will damn us but a wilful One; and when we Sin wilfully, if our Heart is soft and honest, we Sin wittingly, and against our Conscience. Our own Heart sees and observes it before, and will keep us in Mind of it, after we have committed it. Therefore if any Man has a Virtuous and Tender Heart, a Heart that is truly desirous to obey God, and afraid in any Thing to offend him; when his Conscience is silent, he may justly conclude that his Condition is safe; for if it does not condemn him, God never will.

An honest Man's Heart must condemn him, before he has sufficient Reason to condemn himself; and that too not for every Idle Word, or every fruitless Lust, or every Involuntary Dulness of Spirit, and Distraction in Prayer, and Coldness in Devotion, or such other mistaken Marks by which too many are wont to judge of their Title to Salvation. *Heaven and Hell* are not made to depend upon these Things; but tho' a Man be guilty of them, he may notwithstanding be eternally Happy. But

that Accusation of his Conscience, which may give an honest Man just Reason to condemn himself, must be an Accusation for a wilful Breach or deliberate Transgression of some particular Law of Sobriety, Piety, Justice, Charity, Peaceableness. It must accuse him of an unrepented Breach of some of those Laws above-mention'd, which God has plainly made the Terms of Life, and the Condition of Salvation.

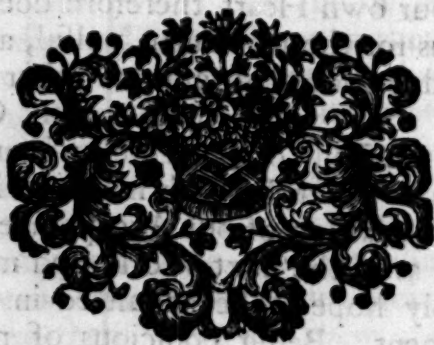
And the Accusation for the Breach of these Laws must be *particular* and *express*, not *general* and roving. For some are of so suspicious and timorous a Temper, that they are still suspecting and condemning of themselves, when they know not for what Reason. They will indict themselves as Men who have sinned greatly, but they cannot shew in what. They judge of themselves not from any Reason or Experience, but at a Venture, and by Chance. They speak not so truly their *Opinions* as their *Fears*, not what their Understandings see and discern, but what their Melancholy suggests to them. For ask them as to any one Particular of the Law of God, and run them all over, and their Consciences cannot charge them with any *wilful* and *unrepented* Transgression of it. But let them overlook all Particulars, and pass a Judgment

of themselves only in General, when they do not judge from particular Instances, which are true Evidence, but only from groundless and small Presumptions; and then they pass a hard Sentence upon themselves, concluding their Sins are very great, and their Conditions very dangerous.

However, no Man shall be Sentenc'd at the Last Day for Notions and Generalities; but they are our particular Sins which must then condemn us. For God's Laws bind us all in single Actions; and if our own Consciences cannot condemn us for us any one wilful and unrepented Action, God will not condemn us for them altogether.

If our own Heart therefore does not accuse us for the particular, wilful, and unrepented Breaches of some or other of these Laws above-mention'd, which God has made the Rule of our Life, and our Observation of which he hath made the indispensable Condition of our Acceptance, we are secure as to the next World, and may comfortably hope to be acquitted in the Last Judgment. Being conscious of no wilful Sin, but what we have repented of, and begging Pardon thro' Christ for our involuntary Sins, we shall have nothing that will be heavy upon us the Last Day, but may go out of the World with Ease, and die in

Comfort. Our Departure hence may be in Peace, because our Appearance at God's Tribunal shall be in Safety; for we shall have nothing worse charg'd upon us there, than we are able here to charge upon our selves. But leaving this World with a good Conscience, we shall be Sentenc'd in the next to a glorious Reward, and bid to enter into our Master's Joy, there to live with our Lord for ever and ever.



INDEX

I N D E X.

A.

- A**bsolutions useless without Repentance, Page 350.
Abstinence glory'd in by the Epicureans, 21.
Adam liable to be tempted before he knew what Sin was, 462.
Actions, the natural Order of them, 459.
Admiration of God, its Entertainment, 87.
Adultery spiritual, no more to be listen'd to by Ladies than carnal, 45.
Amusements, the Ladies at Church, 309.
Affections, the Objects of them fleeting, 137. Their Zeal depends upon Temper, 483. Their Dulness no hinderance of the Success of Prayer, 487.
Anxiety of the Mind perpetual without trust in God, 183.
Apostates, their great Danger, 520.
Appetites, how Man is disorder'd by them, 130.
The Restraints God has laid upon them, 456.
Archetype of all reasonable Creatures, God so, 166.
Army with Banners, why the Church compar'd to it, 321.
Atheists, how they affront Women in charging them with Credulity in Religion, 25. Never a collected Body of them, 34. Heathens not so, *ibid.* The folly of hearkening to them, *ibid.* Not so happy in this Life as Christians, 37, 38. Their Danger, 41.

Index.

Attention of Mind in Prayer cannot always be preserved, 481.

Audit, the great one, how it should be considered, 29, 30.

B.

Blasphemers to be abhorred by Ladies, 45.

Blasphemy how near to the Sin against the Holy Ghost, 508. Not unpardonable, 509. The provoking nature of this Sin, 513.

Body, the Actions of it, as it serves to Religion, 101. The adorning, too much Care taken about it, 301.

Books good ones to be carefully chosen, 105.

Brave Men, their Character, 250. Despise false Courage, 252, 254.

Bread and Wine in the Sacrament represent Christ's Body and Blood, 388.

C.

Cares, worldly, to be removed, 94.

Catholicon, the Sacrament so for Souls, 369.

Charity the Child of Faith, 68. Is the fulfilling of the Law, 86. Consider'd with respect to God, 90. The Duty of it in Fasts, 339.

Choices, how unfit we are to make 'em for ourselves, 180.

Christ, the Story of his Life should be often read, 103. What the Pardon of Sinners cost him, 357. How perfect his Zeal was. 420. His Life the fullest Comment on his Doctrine, 431. His Disciples, how virtuous and happy, 432. He was subject to a Conflict of Flesh and Spirit, 466.

Christi-

Index.

- Christianity, its present Happiness, 36. What Dan-
 gers there are in it, 39. What Pleasures, ib.
 40, 41.*
*Church, the Duty of decent Deportment there, 63.
 In what the Beauty and Strength of it consist,
 407.*
Civilities, humane, to be practis'd by Christians, 490.
Clergy, best Judges of and Guides in Religion, 43.
Closets, how they are abus'd, 51.
Cloyster, the Devotion of it defective, 47.
Communion of Saints a Concord of Souls, 211.
Complacency in God, the Duty of it, 161.
Confession a part of Prayer, 296.
*Confidence in God's Promises, what creates it, 81.
 Entire, taught in the Gospel, 184.*
*Consolations, sensible, not to be look'd for in Acts of
 Devotion, 292.*
Contemplation of God, the Pleasure of it, 158.
Conversation, the freedom of it in Heaven, 204.
*Courage, false, describ'd, 142. True, acquir'd by
 Submission to God's Will, 178.*
Creatures, reasonable, their Beings defin'd, 2.
*Credulity, Womens, a Charge upon them by Atheists,
 25.*
Creed of Nature, what it is, 6.
Cross of Christ, the Doctrine of it, 16.
Curiosity in hearing Sermons to be avoided, 307.

D.

- David, his Consideration of God's Presence in all
 things, 59. His delight in reading the Scriptures,
 114.*
*Death, a Duty in the beginning of Christianity, 16.
 All Sinners look'd upon as in that State, 267.*
Death-bed Repentance not effectual, 355, 361.
Delay, the danger of it in Repentance, 360.

Index.

- Dependance, Man's upon God, 182. What a Happiness and Security, 186, 187.*
- Deprecating, a part of Prayer, 298.*
- Desire after God, how 'tis entertain'd, 88. Outragious and despairing, the Torment of it, 138.*
- Desires, evil, not to be hinder'd, 451. The dangers and guilt of them, 454.*
- Despair, Christians must never give way to it, 82, 83. How to check it, 85. The greatest Torment of the Mind, 138.*
- Devils, their spitefulness, one of Hell Torments, 192.*
- Devotion, Motives to the Exercise of it, 52, 53. How the Day is to be spent in it, 305. Our Minds to be daily season'd with them, 324.*
- Dignity of the Heavenly Life consider'd, 222.*
- Discord, the miserable Fruits of it in our Times, 207.*
- Discourse, religious, its use, 490.*
- Dishonesty, the Devil's, 201.*
- Dolorous Objects should soften the Soul in Prayer, 293.*
- Dominion, God's, over his Creatures, 170. His just Right to it, ibid.*
- Dressing prefer'd to Devotion, 299, 301.*
- Drunkenness, how it drowns the Images of the Soul, 149. The Process of the Commission of that Sin, 470.*
- Duels, the Folly and Wickedness of them, 254.*

E.

- Ejaculations, pious, the use of them, 291.*
- Elect, what their Beatitude shall be accompanied with, 244.*
- Elements of the Sacrament, what they represent, 374.*
- Egyptians, their First-born destroy'd by God, and why, 384.*

Epicu-

Index.

Epicureans Pretenders to Virtue, 18. Glory'd in Abstinency, 21.
 Errors of good Men shall not pervert God's Truth, 446.
 Esau's Repentance not unsuccessful, 518.
 Eternity, happy, depends on our Zeal, 423.
 Eucharist, how frequently the ancient Christians celebrated it, 397.
 Examination of our selves, how necessary, not to receive the Sacrament unworthily, 393.
 Example of Saints the example of God, 223.
 Expostulations of a Christian with his Soul about neglecting the Sacrament, 375. Again, 383. After receiving it, 377. About true Zeal, 421.

F.

Faction, how it abuses Zeal in our Times, 417.
 Faith, its Acts and Offices, 67. & seq. The Signs of it, 70. & seq. Its Confidence, 73. And Miracles, *ibid.* How it differs from Hope, 75. All Prayer must be made with it, 277. Will be judg'd by Works, 423.
 Fancy to be restrain'd, 93. Its Delights not to be indulg'd, 477.
 Fasting, the Duty of it consider'd, 330. Instrument of Prayer, 331. Directions for it, *ibid.* Abuses of it, 336. The Benefits of it, 340.
 Fasts, partial and politic, the Sin of them, 336.
 Fervency in Prayer requisite, 278.
 Fear, Salvation to be wrought out with it, 353. The best Christians subject to it, 445. The Causes of it, 448. The just force of them, 479.
 Fleishly Pleasures to be mortify'd, 151. The Infirmity of the Fleish to be guarded against, 441.
 What it is to walk after it, 473.

Index.

- Food and Raiment a Subject of Prayer*, 276.
Forms of private Prayer should be short, 287. *Variety of them recommended*, 290.
Fortitude, the Virtue of it, 141. *It hardens Men against Evil*, 143. *How necessary for the other World*, 144.
Freedom of a religious Life, 225.

G.

- Ghost, Holy, the Sin against it treated of*, 496. *And see the Term us'd promiscuously with Spirit*, 497. *What is meant by the Sin against it*, 504. *And see what it is*, 511, 516.
Gifts extraordinary, the Spirit of God understood by them, 498. *The variety of them*, *ibid.* & seq.
Glory, degrees of it in Heaven, 218. *Human, the Vanity of it*, 242. *Of God, the end of Zeal*, 404. *It ministers effectually to it*, 427.
Gluttony, how it clogs the Spirits, 149.
God, what is understood by his Being, 2. *By his Presence*, 54. *The Pleasure of serving him*, 119. *Should be the Object of Contemplation*, 156. *Our Nature to be reconcil'd to his*, 162. *His Happiness the Treasury of divine Lovers*, 164.
Goods, worldly, how far they should be lov'd, 146.
Gospel, how abus'd, 12. *The end of it*, 16.
Grace, how God is present by it, 56. *How it receives growth from the Sacrament*, 371. *The offer of it universal*, 513.
Graces, the exercise of them in receiving the Sacrament, 381. *The whole Chain dissolv'd if one Link wanting*, 406.
Grandeurs of the World, why they are held in such Esteem, 242.
Gratitude, why it obliges Women to be religious, 27.
Growth

Index.

Growth in Grace what it is, 521, 522. In saving Grace what, 527.

Great Men how they should fear their Admirers, 247.

H.

Habits not to be mistaken for Nature, 409.

Hands of God, the inestimable Advantage of being there, 181.

Hatred, the Plague of Society, 191.

Happiness of Man the great Aim of God in establishing Religion, 13. Wherein it consists, 15. & seq.

What Women center it in, 22. None without Reason, 135. Degrees of it in Heaven, 219.

Hearing the Word of God, the Duty of it, 101. People too greedy of it in Lectures, 317.

Hearts of Men, how God is present in them, 57. If honest, need not fear, 531. Will condemn a Man, 533.

Heats religious, how we may be deceiv'd by them, 523.

Heaven the Seat of God, 55. The Wise will have their Conversation there, 128. The Freedom of it, 205. Degrees of Happiness there, 219. In what the State of it consists, 237.

Hell, the intolerable Torment of it, 145. How occasion'd by the Malice of Devils, 194. In what the State of it consists, 237.

Hierocles his Account of the Pythagorean Philosophy, 20.

Holiness, what an Instance Prayer is of it, 326. What an Instrument, ib. The Flower of God's Attributes, 428.

Honesty, the Duty of it, 199.

Honour render'd to God by Prayer, 320. Of the World, who have no taste of it, 440.

Hope, how it differs from Faith, 75. The Acts of it,

Index.

it, 76. *Rules to govern it by*, 77. *Reasons for it*, 84, 85.

Horror, that of the Wicked hereafter, 174.

Humility of Spirit, the Duty of it, 65. *Considerations upon it*, 153. *How necessary in receiving the Lord's-Supper*, 394.

Hypocrisie in Communities preferable to Prophaneness, 308.

I.

Jacob, how he stole his Father's Blessing, 519.

Idle Words, the Mistake about them, 488, & seq.

Slanderous understood by them, 492.

Idolatry, the Covetous guilty of it, 139.

Imitation of God's Perfections, the Pleasure of it, 167.

Immortality made a Jest of by Atheists, 35.

Infidelity, means to avoid it, 74.

Injustice detested by Barbarians, 201.

Integrity what we shall be try'd by at the last Day, 480.

Intemperance, Cautions against it, 63. *Not to be the Prologue to Fasting*, 338.

Intercession of Christ gives Prayer a Blessing, 275.

What Part of Prayer so called, 283.

Intermission not to be suffer'd in Prayer, 319.

Judgment, last, what Sins it will condemn us for, 535.

Justice, the Duty of it in Society, 196. *In what the Practice of it consists*, 199.

Just Men, their inestimable Happiness, 268.

K.

Kings, in what Sense the Just are so, 269.

Index.

L.

- Ladies how abus'd by wicked Flatterers, 32. How they mispend their Mornings, 299. A Senate of them at Rome what they did, 303. Their Amusements at Church, 309. This Work address'd to them, 362.*
- Lectures, Church, how fond People are of them, 315.*
- Liberties, innocent, allow'd by Christ, 489.*
- Liberty, Christian, with respect to the Lord's Day, 112. Of the heavenly Life, 227.*
- Life, Christian, the only delightful one, 128. Its Happiness and Ease, 231, 232. The Necessity of it, 235. To be first made sure of, 487.*
- Life, sensual, its Uneasiness, 232.*
- Light, few sin for want of it, 317.*
- Lives of Christ's Disciples as bright as their Doctrines, 435.*
- Lord's-day, how it is to be kept, 108, & seq. As a Memorial of the Resurrection, 111. Directions for observing it, ibid.*
- Love of God, the Happiness of it, 14. His best Gift 86. What it is made up of, 89. Directions for it, 91. Zeal an Excrement of it, 98. More delightful than Sensualities. 230.*
- Lustings natural and necessary, 452. First not sinful, ibid.*
- Lusts, their Dominion over us, 225. They or Reason to be conquer'd, 226. Not to be cur'd by Fasting only, 335. Require frequent Discipline, 341. We shall not be condemn'd for feeble ones, 450. When not sinful, 455. When they are so, 457. Differ in Degrees, 463. How they grow, 464. Which of them we shall be condemn'd for, 467, & seq. When damnable, 472. To be carefully watch'd over, 476.*

M.

Index.

M.

- Magistrates God's Vicegerents in the legal Exercise of their Offices*, 213.
Malice, the Plague of Society, 191.
Man most adapted to Society of all Creatures, 188.
His Need of it, *ibid.* Something great in him, 259.
Martyrs, what supported them, 37. *Their Love of God, the highest Instance of it*, 96.
Mediator, the Doctrine of one the principal Subject of Revelation, 9.
Meditation upon God and Christ, the Duty of it, 116.
Melancholly, its false Suggestions, 134.
Mercy of God, how extensive it is, 107.
Mind, the same Disposition as it has here, the same it will have in the other World, 207, 215. *It is to be dispos'd for Heaven*, 237. *The Merit of its good Endowments and Qualities consider'd*, 255. *Its Excellence and Grandeur*, 259.
Ministers of the Gospel, Prejudices against their Persons not to hurt their Doctrine, 164. *Confession to them does not ease the Soul of its Burthen*, 350.
Miseries, one of the greatest, 239.
Misery and Wickedness inseparable, 238.
Moderation, the peculiar Office of it, 139.
Morning Prayer, the Necessity of it, 301.
Mortification, what it was in the Beginning of Christianity, 17. *By Fasting, the Duty of it*, 334. *Of Lusts, no Salvation without it*, 474, 475.

N.

- Natural Religion, what is meant by it*, 3. *As much the Voice of God as Revelation*, 4. *Reason what it teaches us*, *ibid.* *Religion has only natural Reason*

Index.

- son for its Measure, 5. Relies upon four Principles, 106.*
Nature, humane, one of the sweetest Pleasures 'tis capable of, 158.
Nature's Creed, what it is, 6.
Neighbour, the great Duty of our Love to him, 98.
Noises during the Time of divine Service in Churches, the Indecency of them, 312.
Nothingness of the Things of this World, 240.
Nourishment of the Soul by the Sacrament, 395.
Numa his Care of Religion, 312.

O.

- Obedience to God, the Reasonableness of it, 175. Of our whole Man requir'd by him, 449. Entire, secures our future Happiness, 528. What it is, 529.*
Oblations of our Soul to God, 324.
Obligation of Religion, 11.
Obstinacy of wicked Men and Devils, 214, 215.
Omission of Sacrament, the Sin of it, 363. Excuses for it answered, 364. The great Punishment that will follow it, 366. A Contempt of God's Commandment, 398.
Omissions, Sins of, the slight Opinion Men have of them, 365.
Omnipotence, when Humanity may be said to be invested with it, 23.
Origen, what he says of his sacrificing to Idols, 298.
Original Corruption, some Degree of it may remain in the perfect Man, 415.
Othoniel, his Valour the Spirit of God, 503.

P.

- Pardon, Hopes of, just as our Repentance, 345. A greater Favour to Man than ever the Angels had,*

Index.

- had, 257. What Sin is deny'd it, 511.*
Passion, Christ's, the Sacrament a Representation of it, 387.
Passions, the Duty of governing them, 132. Sublimated by Prayer, 324.
Peace of Conscience, how it is acquir'd, 118.
Peace and Quietness, Lessons for it out of Scripture, 208.
Penitent, the Duty of one, 354.
Perfect Man, what he must be endow'd with, 408. Should be great in his own Business, 410.
Perfection, to what height of it Christ's Disciples arriv'd, 413. And has its Bounds, 414. The Necessity of it, 430. Not an imaginary Notion, 433. What opposite to the Pleasures of Mankind, 436. In what Sense to be taken, 442.
Perfections of God to be imitated, 165. The Nature of doing it, 167. 'Tis imitating his Happiness, 169.
Petition a part of Prayer, 297.
Piety, the Excellence of it, 22, 23. Greatest Ornament of Ladies, 25. The Obligations of Women to it, 27, 28, 29. Consider'd in a restrain'd Sense, 46. The Pleasures of it, 120, 121, 122. Only true, 124. Not given to Melancholly, 128.
Pitifulness a Duty in Christians, 195.
Pleasure too much minded by Ladies, 49. Of Piety only true, 124. Worldly, how short and vain, 125. Bodily abstain'd from by the Primitive Christians, 150. Shou'd be despis'd as Trifles, 152. Sensual how fleeting and mischievous, 228.
Posture in Prayer must be reverend, 282. Troublesome requisite, 348.
Poverty of Sinners, 265.
Prayer, Common, neglected, 315.
Prayer, a Form of one, 329. For Fasting, 342. For acquiring Perfection, 444.

Prayer,

Index.

Prayer, Directions concerning it, 95. Mens Backwardness in it, 272. How we should behave our selves in the Exercise of it, 274. Must be incessant, 279. We must work with it, 281. Rules for it, 294. Its Power, 320. What we are bound to in it, 481. How much good Christians mind it, 523.

Preaching, the End of it, 315.

Presence of God, how to be understood, 54. The Usefulness of considering it in all things, 58, 59. Occasions Joy, 64.

Private Devotion not to commute for the Omission of Publick, 306.

Providence, God's, the Trust we should put in it, 185.

Promises of God to be rely'd upon, 78, 79, 84.

Prudence, religious, tends to a Life of Reason, 132. Consists in the Use of it, 133.

Parity, the Effect of the Love of God, 91.

Publick Prayer the necessity of it 322.

Pythagorean Philosophy what it was, 20.

Pythagoras his Precept about the Worship of the Gods, 310.

Q.

Queen Mary II, her exemplary Devotion, 310.

Quality, mistaken Notions of it, 245. What St. Chrysostom says of it, 248.

Quality, People of, thought above Religion, 31. Women corrupted by the Wits of the Age, 43. Shon'd have more Devotion than others, 48. Think it Breeding to contemn Religion, 50. How Men are mistaken about it, 245.

R.

Index.

R.

- Rancour the Devil's Character*, 192.
Raptures religious, not a Growth in Grace, 524.
Reading the Scripture, the Duty of it, 101.
Reason, what it teaches us concerning God, 4. *The noblest Principle of Nature*, 130. *Will subdue the Passions*, 134. *No true Happiness without it*, 135. *That or our Lusts to be conquered*, 226. *dos'd by Sense*, 233.
Rebellion against God is the Sin of Witchcraft, 172.
Relapse, how fearful Penitents should be of it, 356.
Religion what it respects, 1. *Its Definition*, 2. *Natural what is meant by it*, 3. *Has only natural Reason for its Measure*, 5. *Reveal'd*, 7. *Principles necessary to found its Obligation in*, 11. *Man's Happiness its End*, 13. *Taken in a larger Sense*, 67. *New Beginners in it directed*, 92. *Full of Pleasure when perfect*, 437.
Repentance how serv'd by Fasting, 332, 333. *What a Change it makes*, 343. *But one in a Man's Life*, 344. *Its only Perfection*, 352. *The best Preparation for the Sacrament*, 373.
Retirement, Directions for the Worship of God in it, 61.
Reveal'd Religion what it is, 7.
Revelation, the great Theme of it, 8. *The principal Subject of it*, 9.
Rewards of Heaven how great, 359.
Righteous, their Pleasures full and satisfying, 126.
Righteousness as confin'd to Society, in what it consists, 199. *The Extent of it consider'd*, 405.
Rights, natural and acquir'd, 197, 198.
Rudeness of neglecting the Sacrament, 370.

Index.

S.

Sabbath-day, the Duty and Reason of keeping it religiously by the Jews, 107. How the Observation of it differs from that of the Lord's day, 108.

Sacrament how refreshing to the Soul, 116. The Danger of deferring it to a Death-bed, 362. Frequently receiv'd by primitive Christians, 364. Preparatives for it, how beneficial, 367. The most solemn thing in Religion, 372. Why 'tis neglected, 377. Why instituted, 379. How a Sacrifice, 385.

Saints Days to be kept sparingly, 113.

Saints in Heaven how different from Men on Earth, 221.

Science has something glaring in it, 260. How to live the best part of it, 262.

Security, good Mens, 447.

Scripture, the Plainness of its Precepts, 102. The Pleasantness of studying them, 114.

Senate, Roman Ladies, what they did, 303.

Sense stupifies Reason, and quiets it, 233.

Sensual Pleasures how fleeting and mischievous, 228.

Service, divine, People should not come late to it, 311.

Servants, care to be taken that they do not prophane the Lord's Day, 112.

Sickness how it changes Temper, 485.

Silence in Prayer a help to Attention, 288.

Simon Magus his great Sin, 514.

Sincerity a heavenly Virtue, 203.

Sinners their Misery both in this World and the next, 265. The best Men will be so, 517.

Sins, no measure for them, 347. The Duty of confessing them, 349. By what steps we are carry'd to commit them, 468.

Slander, the Sin of it, 197.

Slandering

Index.

- Slandering God's Gifts, the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, 516.
- Slavery of Sinners*, 266.
- Sloth the Occasion of Peoples coming late to Church*, 314.
- Social Virtue, in what it consists*, 190.
- Society, Man of all Creatures most adapted to it*, 188. *Hatred and Malice the Plague of it*, 191.
- Socrates his Definition of the Worship of God*, 24.
- Solomon his Judgment of the Grandeurs of the World*, 270.
- Sorrow, penitent, what it is*, 346.
- Soul, Health of, in what it consists*, 147. *Will contract a Fondness for the Body*, 149. *In what its Strength consists*, 259. *The ruling and noblest Part of Man*, 434.
- Souls wicked, their Repugnancy to heavenly Happiness*, 236.
- Spirit, reverend Frame of, necessary in receiving the Sacrament*, 392. *Of God, what is understood by it*, 496.
- Stoicks, their Flights too daring*, 19.
- Submission to God's Will, the Duty of it*, 169. *Nothing should tempt us from it*, 175. *The Ease of it to the Soul*, 176.
- Superiors the Duty of Submission to them*, 211. *Their Duty in the Exercise of their Offices*, 212.
- Supper of the Lord, what it contains as an Act of divine Worship*, 380. *How receiv'd by the ancient Christians*, 386. *Declares the Union of Christians with Christ*, 389. *How we should prepare our selves for it*, 392. *All Opportunities of receiving is to be embrac'd*, 396. *Not to be expos'd to political Uses*, 400.
- Surliness of Temper, a Cure for it*, 217.
- Surprise, how Sinners are overtaken by it*, 368.

Index.

Symbols of the Sacrament, how we dedicate our selves to God by them, 376. What they bring into our Minds, 382.

T.

Table Books us'd in holy Times, 351.

Tediousness of Spirit in Prayer corrected, 288. The beginning of the most dangerous Condition in the World, 295.

Temper of Mind to be always peaccable, 209. Obsti- nacy of it, a Plague to Society, 214, 216. The difference of it, 484. Chearful one that of a Christian, 489.

Temperance, Considerations on that Virtue, 148.

Temptations in Prayer, how to arm against them, 286. Prayer our antidote against them, 327. In what they consist, 457. In what their force lie, 460. Meer ones not mortal, 461, 471. Differ in degree, 463. We must not throw our selves into them, 477.

Tongue, the Duties of it, 526.

Tongues, the Gift of them, 498.

Truth, to contemplate it is the natural use of our Understanding, 155.

Tully his State of Happiness, 20.

V.

Valour, how highly 'tis esteem'd, 249. By the Ladies, 250. The false distinguish'd from the true, 251.

Vanity, how condemn'd in Scripture, 270. The La- dies neglect their Duty for it, 303.

Vice, the slavery of it, 40.

Virtue preferable to Science, 263. The Perfection of Reason, 429.

Virtues

Index.

Virtues and Graces, how delightful, 118. Their suitableness to present Happiness, 220. What they are, 411. To what height in them the perfect Man may arrive, 412.

Vision of God by Contemplation, the Extasie of it, 159. Beatifick, its Raptures, 163.

Understanding, what it should contemplate, 155.

Uniformity of our Souls, how necessary to our Happiness, 134.

Union, how necessary to the Happiness of Society, 205. Among Christ's Disciples declar'd by the Sacrament, 390.

Unworthiness of receiving the Sacrament consider'd, 398.

Vow to God an Act of Prayer, 284. Sacramental to be frequently renew'd, 378.

W.

Wandering Spirits in Prayer, a Remedy against them, 186.

Wantonness, the Confusion it makes in the Mind, 149.

Watchfulness to be always join'd with Prayer, 281.

Wickedness and Misery inseparable, 238.

Wilderness barren, to whom the spiritual World is so, 141.

Willful Sins not desperate, 505. When damnable, 533.

Will of God, our Duty to be resign'd to it, 176, 177. And that with Cheerfulness, 179.

Will, good, the Duty and Benefit of it in Society, 195.

Wine and Bread in the Sacrament represent Christ's Body and Blood, 388.

Wisdom

Index.

Wisdom the Peace and Pleasure of her Ways, 120.

The Happiness of her Sons, 123.

Witchcraft. Sin of, Rebellion against God compar'd to it, 172.

Wit, how ambitious Men are of the Character of it, 256. Different Ideas of 257. Humane Sciences marks of its greatness, 263.

Wits of the Age Corrupters of Ladies Principles of Religion, 43.

Women, what they are too apt to center their Happiness in. 22. Affronted by the Atheists, who impute their Religion to their Credulity, 25. Ought to value themselves on their Faith, 26. Their Obligations to Piety, 28. Their Interest in it, 29. Of Quality, conceal their Learning out of Vanity, 260.

Word of God, what is so, and what is not, 102.

Words of Prayer should be pertinent and grave, 280.

Works, good, Zeal consists in them, 416. Nothing more acceptable to God, 424. Natural and Revealed Religion center in them, 426. All Men will be judg'd by them, 530.

Worldly Men Unbelievers, 71. Can never arrive at Perfection, 439. How to know them, ibid.

Worshipping of God the best way, 24. Directions for Women in it, 52, 60. In Retirement, 61.

Y.

Young Converts, the Power of their Lusts. 465.

Z.

Zeal, cautions concerning it in the Love of God 97. An Excrease of divine Love, 98. In what it may

Index.

may be let loose, 99. Not a direct Duty, 100.
How it is abus'd, 402. What is meant by a
State of it, 403. Consider'd as it consists in good
Works, 416. The various degrees of it stated,
419. How abus'd by Faction, 417. The neces-
sity of it, 424.
Zealots, how ill their Morals agree with their Pro-
fessions, 418.

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